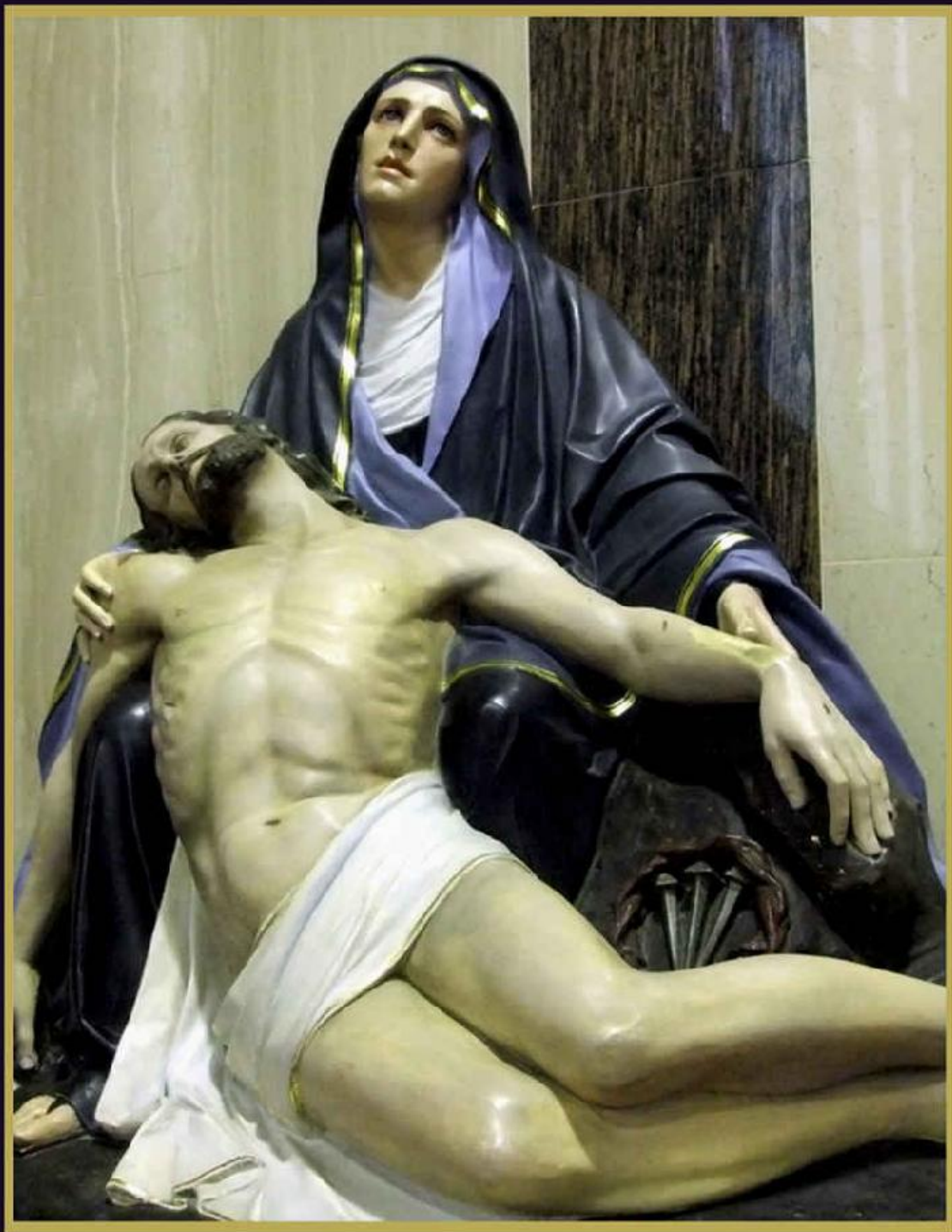


The Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary



*Prayers, Devotions and
Reflections for September*

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The Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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THE SEVEN SORROWS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

**Prayers, Devotions and Reflections
for September**

IN LUMINE FIDEI



RITA BOGNA

Ah, Mary, pierced with sorrow,
Remember, reach and save,
The soul that comes tomorrow
Before the God that gave!
(Rudyard Kipling, 1896)



INTRODUCTION

Mary's martyrdom began with the first knowledge which the prophecies gave her of the sufferings which the Messiah would have to endure. It increased when she was chosen to be the Mother of that Messiah, destined to die a cruel death for the sins of the world. It became more intense when she heard the words of holy Simeon, and saw the flowing of the first drops of our Saviour's Blood. It continued during the thirty-three years of our Lord's life. It attained its greatest intensity during the hours of the Passion. Even after the Resurrection and Ascension it did not entirely cease: Mary suffered as long as she lived, for she could not forget any of her sorrows, but, on the contrary, recalled every day the painful remembrance by visiting (it is believed) the places where she beheld the sufferings of her adorable Child.

Father Peter Chandlery (1846-1925)

On the feast of the Assumption in 1233 the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to seven young noble Florentine men and asked them to withdraw from the world and form a new religious order devoted particularly to her Seven Sorrows. These men, who had become close friends after joining the Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin (the Praisers) in 1225-1227, were Buonfiglio Monaldo, who was the oldest and became their leader, and Alessandro Falconieri, Benedetto dell'Antella, Bartolomeo Amidei, Ricovero Uguccione, Gerardino Sostegni and Giovanni Buonagiunta. Under their spiritual director, Father Giacomo de Poggibonsi, they became more and more unworldly and desired a life of penance and prayer and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In a second vision in 1239 Mary bore a black habit in her hand and an angel held a scroll inscribed with the title “Servants of Mary.” Asking them to spread devotion to her Seven Sorrows, she told them that she had chosen them to be her servants and wished them to wear a black habit and live according to the Rule of Saint Augustine. They retired to the desolate Monte Senario in Tuscany and there built a church and hermitage. From the 13th of April 1240 their religious community became known as the [Servants of Mary](#) (the ‘Servites’). Pope Alexander IV informally recognised the Order (*Ordo Servorum Beatae Virginis Mariae*) in 1259 and it was formally approved by Pope Benedict XI in 1304. Two years later Saint Juliana Falconiere (1270–1341) founded the Third Order for women.

As early as 1423 Archbishop Theodoric of Cologne prescribed a feast in honour of Our Lady’s sorrows to be kept by his flock. With the knowledge of the Holy See, the feast was gradually introduced in other countries in Europe and papal approval for a feast in honour of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary was given to the Servites in 1667. In 1727 Pope Benedict XIII ordered the feast to be kept in the whole Church under the name of the Feast of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin, as before this time it had been called by various names, including Our Lady of Pity, The Compassion of Our Lady, and in France, Notre Dame de la Pâmoison (Our Lady of the Swoon).

In 1913 Pope Saint Pius X ordered the feast to be observed on the 15th of September, the day after the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. It is now known as the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Devotion to the Seven Sorrows of Mary should be practised especially by those who wish to rid themselves of sinful habits. This devotion—

- nourishes the spirit of compunction;

- affords great consolation;
- strengthens confidence in God's mercy;
- draws down the special protection of the Blessed Mother in the hour of temptation;
- preserves the converted sinner from relapsing into sin.

While praying in the great Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared in a vision to Saint Bridget of Sweden (1303–1373) with the holy prophet Simeon and an angel bearing a long sword red with blood. According to Saint Alphonsus Maria de' Ligouri (1696–1787), the sword symbolised the long and bitter grief that never ceased to pierce the sacred heart of the Blessed Virgin.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) was particularly devoted to Our Lady of Sorrows, wearing on his breast a picture representing Mary at the foot of the cross with her heart transfixes by a sword. When his nephew Father Antonio Araoz was leaving Rome for Spain, Saint Ignatius gave him this picture, saying:

Since the day of my conversion, when I exchanged my secular dress for the garb of a penitent, never has this picture left me. I have had it always on my heart with my crucifix, and I have received from it wonderful help. Take it therefore: let it be to you the pledge of a perpetual assistance from Our Lady, and the treasure of your heart.

Saint Paul of the Cross (Paolo Francesco Danei, 1694–1775) who founded the [Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ](#) (the 'Passionists' Order) also had a particular devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows. He recommended meditation on the Seven Sorrows to everyone and promoted the devotion to the Seven Sorrows with the same zeal as devotion to the

Passion of Christ, for he said that if we go to the cross, there is the Mother, and where the Mother is, there is the Son.

Saint Paul of the Cross compared the sufferings of Jesus and the griefs of His Mother to two seas and said that we pass from the first to the second:

The grief of Mary is like the Mediterranean Sea; for it is written: '*Magna est velut mare contritio tua*' [Your voice is like the sea]. From this sea we pass to the other boundless sea of the Passion of Jesus, in whose person David says, '*Veni in altitudinem maris*' [I came into deep waters], and here the soul enriches herself, and fishes up most precious pearls of the virtues of Jesus and Mary."

Mary revealed to Saint Bridget that she will grant those who daily honour her by saying seven Hail Marys while meditating on her tears and sorrows the following seven graces:

1. I will grant peace to their families.
2. They will be enlightened about the divine mysteries.
3. I will console them in their pains and I will accompany them in their work.
4. I will give them as much as they ask for as long as it does not oppose the adorable will of my divine Son or the sanctification of their souls.
5. I will defend them in their spiritual battles with the infernal enemy and I will protect them at every instant of their lives.
6. I will visibly help them at the moment of their death — they will see the face of their mother.
7. I have obtained this grace from my divine Son, that those who propagate this devotion to my tears and

sorrows will be taken directly from this earthly life to eternal happiness, since all their sins will be forgiven and my Son will be their eternal consolation and joy.

And, according to Saint Alphonsus, Our Lord revealed to Saint Elizabeth of Hungary (1207–1231) that He will grant those who are devoted to the Seven Sorrows of His Blessed Mother the following four graces:

1. Those who invoke the divine Mother by her sorrows, before death will merit to obtain true repentance of all their sins.
2. He will protect them in their tribulations, especially at the hour of death.
3. He will impress on them the memory of His Passion, and they will have their reward for it in Heaven.
4. He will commit such devout servants to the hands of Mary, that she may dispose of them according to her pleasure, and obtain for them all the graces she desires.

Part 1 of this book consists of miscellaneous prayers and other devotions.

Part 2 is a step-by-step guide to praying the popular Servite Rosary (or Chaplet) of the Seven Sorrows. Each prayer is repeated under its own heading, mimicking the use of beads, so that the Rosary can be recited without the use of a chaplet bead set, which is made up of seven septaines of beads.

Part 3 of the book is a set of Reflections on the Seven Sorrows written by Saint Alphonsus Ligouri. These have been taken from his book, *The Glories of Mary*, which was translated from Italian into English for the first time in the mid-nineteenth century in the United States.

This book is written in Australian-English. American readers may see some words that look misspelt, but are in fact

correct according to Australian usage. Also, in this book the word 'compassionate' is frequently used as a verb which means 'to feel compassion for,' as well as in its more common and modern use as an adjective.

"None of us will ever be called upon to stand," wrote the Dominican Sister Mary Jean Dorcy in 1945, "as Mary stood, beneath a cross where a Son dearer than life itself hangs dying. Even martyrdom, and all the pains of all the martyrs of the last nineteen hundred years, cannot measure up to the sorrows of Mary. But to each of us, some day, sorrow will come, and death will take away those we love. In that day we shall need to remember Mary's love, her courage, her Faith. More than that do we need her help to make us courageous in the crosses of every day, so that we may stand unafraid before a jeering world and do what we know to be right, whatever the mob might think."

O holy Mary, most compassionate of all the compassionate, and holiest of all the holy, intercede for us. Through you, O Virgin, may He receive our prayers, Who born for us of you, reigns above the skies; so that by His loving kindness our sins may be cleansed away. Amen.

Rita Bogna

Adelaide, Feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
October 2015.

PART 1 - PRAYERS AND OTHER DEVOTIONS

ACT OF CONSECRATION

O Mary, Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God and our Mother, I consecrate myself to you and lovingly offer you my body and soul, my life and death. O Queen of Martyrs, I offer you my sufferings and sorrows. Most compassionate Virgin, by the agonising Heart of Jesus your Son, deign to take pity on the afflictions of the Holy Church, our Mother. Remember our Holy Father the Pope. Beg mercy for our dear country, for the faithful of this diocese, for all the members of our families, and for our benefactors, friends and enemies. Beg mercy for all sinners, especially for the dying. O most afflicted of Mothers, do not reject the sincere homage of our compassion and sorrow, pray for us now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

(The Dominican Manual (1902) 340)

HAIL MARY SORROWFUL

Hail Mary, full of sorrows, the Crucified is with you.

Most sorrowful are you among women, and most sorrowful is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of the Crucified, beg tears for us, the crucifiers of your Son, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

(Manual of Devotions (1868) 162)

MEMORARE TRISTE

Remember, O Virgin Mary, most sorrowful of the afflicted daughters of suffering Eve, that from all ages it has never been known that anyone imploring your assistance failed to gain your compassion and protection.

Animated with the confidence which this inspires, to you, O Queen of Martyrs and Virgin Mother, I come as a contrite sinner, weeping and kneeling.

Do not, O Mother of Jesus crucified, despise my suppliant voice, but hear and grant my prayer. Amen.

(Manual of Devotions (1868) 137)

NOVENA

O most holy and afflicted Virgin, Queen of Martyrs, who stood motionless beneath the cross witnessing the agony of your expiring Son, through the unceasing sufferings of your life of sorrow, and the bliss which now more than amply repays you for your past trials, look down with a Mother's tenderness and pity on me, kneeling before you to venerate your sorrows and place my requests with filial confidence in the sanctuary of your wounded heart.

Present them, I beseech you, on my behalf to Jesus Christ, through the merits of His own most sacred death and Passion, together with your sufferings at the foot of the cross, and through the united efficacy of both, obtain the grant of my present petition. To whom can I recur in my wants and miseries, if not to you, O Mother of Mercy, who having so deeply drunk of the chalice of your Son, can compassionate the woes of those who still sigh in the land of exile.

Offer for me to my Saviour one drop of the blood which flowed from His sacred veins, one of the tears which trickled from His divine eyes, and one of the sighs which rent His adorable Heart. O Refuge of the universe and Hope of the whole world, do not reject my earnest prayer, but graciously obtain the grant of my petition. Amen.

(The Dominican Manual (1902) 367)

PIOUS EXERCISE

Bid me, O Mother blessed!
On my heart the wounds impressed
Suffered by the Crucified.

(Prayer-Book for Religious (1914) 745)

PRAYERS FOR THE LAST HOURS

Those who during their life are devout to the sufferings of Mary will enjoy great comfort at their death.

Prayer (1)

O Mother of grief, Queen of martyrs and of sufferings, you wept so much for your Son who died for my salvation. But what will your tears avail me if I am so unfortunate as to damn myself? By the merits of your woes and pains, obtain for me, then, a true repentance for my sins, and a true change of life, with a tender compassion for your sufferings and the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Since Jesus and you, although innocent, suffered so much for me, let me also suffer something for your love, I who, by my sins, have deserved Hell. My divine Mother, I implore you, by the affliction you endured in seeing your Son bow down his head and expire upon the cross, obtain for me a good death. Fail not to aid my afflicted and struggling soul in that great passage from life to death. Perhaps I may not then be able to invoke with my lips Jesus and Mary: I invoke them now beforehand, and I beseech you, holy object of my hope, that you may assist me at that last moment. Amen.

(Saint Alphonsus Ligouri – Year of Mary (1866) 85)

Prayer (2)

O Mother of Sorrows, by the anguish and love with which you stood beneath the cross of Jesus, stand by me in my last agony. To your maternal heart I commend the last hours of my life. Offer these hours to the Eternal Father in union with the agony of our dearest Lord. Offer frequently, in atonement for my sins, the Precious Blood of Jesus which mingled with your tears on Calvary to obtain for me the grace to receive Holy Communion immediately before my death, and to breathe forth my soul in the actual presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. And, O dearest Mother, when the moment of my death at length arrives, present me as your child to Jesus and ask Him forgiveness on my behalf, for I knew not what I did, and ask that I may be received into His kingdom. Amen.

(The Dominican Manual (1902) 340)

Prayer (3)

O Most Holy Mother of Sorrows, by that intense martyrdom which you suffered at the foot of the cross during the three hours of the agony of Jesus, deign to aid us all, the children of your sorrows, in our last agony, that by your prayers we may pass from our bed of death to adorn your crown in Paradise.

Three Hail Marys.

Mother of Mercy, Mother of Grace,

Mary, help a fallen race;

Shield us when the foe is nigh,

And receive us when we die.

V. From sudden and unprepared death,

R. Deliver us, O Lord.

V. From the snares of the devil,

R. Deliver us, O Lord.

V. From everlasting death,

R. Deliver us, O Lord.

O God, who for the salvation of the human race has, in the most bitter death of your Son, made for us both an example and a refuge, grant, we beseech you, that in the last peril, at the hour of our death, we may merit to obtain the full effect of His great charity, and be made partakers of our Redeemer's glory. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

(The Raccolta (1910) 104)

OTHER PRAYERS

Prayer (1)

Most Holy Mother, Queen of Sorrows, who followed your beloved Son through all the Way of the Cross, and whose heart was pierced with a fresh sword of grief at all the Stations of that most sorrowful journey, obtain for us, we beseech you, most loving Mother, a perpetual remembrance of our blessed Saviour's cross and death, and a true and tender devotion to all the mysteries of His most holy Passion.

Obtain for us the grace to hate sin, as He hated it in the agony in the garden, to endure wrong and insult with all patience, as He endured them in the judgement-hall, to be meek and humble in all our trials, as He was before His judges, to love our enemies as He loved His murderers, and prayed for them on the cross, and to glorify God and do good to our neighbours, as He did in every mystery of His sufferings.

Queen of Martyrs, who, by the sorrows of your Immaculate Heart on Calvary, merited to share the Passion of our blessed Redeemer, obtain for us some portion of your compassion, that for the love of Jesus crucified, we may be crucified to the world in this life, and in the life to come, may, by His infinite merits and your powerful intercession, reign with Him in everlasting glory. Amen.

(Prayer-Book for Religious (1914) 745)

Prayer (2)

Mary, most holy Virgin and Queen of Martyrs, would that I could be transported to Heaven, there to contemplate the honours bestowed on you by the Blessed Trinity and by all the heavenly court. But since I am still a pilgrim in this valley of tears, accept from me, your unworthy and sinful servant, the most sincere homage and the most complete act of submission which a human being is capable of making to you.

In your adorable Heart, transfixed with so many swords of grief, I lay, once for all, my poor soul. Receive me as the companion of your sorrows, and do not allow me ever to be separated from that cross on which your only Son breathed forth His blessed soul for me. With you, O Mary, will I suffer all the trials, contradictions and infirmities with which it may please your Divine Son to visit me in this life.

I offer all to you in memory of those sorrows which you endured during your life on earth, so that every thought of my mind, every beating of my heart, may from now on be an act of compassion for your sorrows and an act of rejoicing in the glories which you now enjoy in Heaven.

Therefore, dear Mother, while I now compassionate you and rejoice to see you thus glorified, have compassion on me and reconcile me with your Son Jesus, that I may be able to return and be your true and faithful child. Come on my last day to assist me in my agony, as you once assisted at that of your divine Son, so that from this cruel exile I may come to share in your glory in Heaven. Amen.

(The Raccolta (1910) 226)

Prayer (3)

O holy Virgin and Mother, whose soul a sword of grief went through in the Passion of your divine Son, and who in His glorious Resurrection was filled with unending joy at His triumph, intercede for us, your supplicants, that we may become so truly partakers in the adversities of the Church and the trials of the Holy Father our Pope, that we may deserve to share in the consolations they desire, in the charity and peace of the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

(The Raccolta (1910) 227)

Prayer (4)

1. I compassionate you, sorrowing Mary, in the affliction of your tender heart at the prophecy of the holy old man Simeon. Dear Mother, by your heart then so afflicted, obtain for me the virtue of humility and the gift of holy fear of God. Amen.

Hail Mary.

2. I compassionate you, sorrowing Mary, in the anxiety which your sensitive heart underwent in the flight and sojourn in Egypt. Dear Mother, by your heart then made so anxious, obtain for me the virtue of liberality, especially towards the poor, and the gift of pity.

Hail Mary.

3. I compassionate you, sorrowing Mary, in the trouble of your anxious heart, when you lost your dear Son Jesus. Dear Mother, by your heart then so troubled, obtain for me the virtue of holy chastity and the gift of knowledge.

Hail Mary.

4. I compassionate you, sorrowing Mary, in the shock your maternal heart underwent when Jesus met you carrying His cross. Dear Mother, by your loving heart then so overwhelmed, obtain for me the virtue of patience and the gift of fortitude.

Hail Mary.

5. I compassionate you, sorrowing Mary, in the martyrdom your generous heart bore so nobly while you stood by Jesus in His agony. Dear Mother, by your heart then so martyred, obtain for me the virtue of temperance and the gift of counsel.

Hail Mary.

6. I compassionate you, sorrowing Mary, in the wound of your tender heart when the sacred side of Jesus was pierced with the lance. Dear Mother, by your heart then so transfixed, obtain for me the virtue of fraternal charity and the gift of understanding.

Hail Mary.

7. I compassionate you, sorrowing Mary, in the pang felt by your loving heart when the body of Jesus was buried in the grave. Dear Mother, by all the bitterness of desolation you then experienced, obtain for me the virtue of diligence and the gift of wisdom.

Hail Mary.

V. Pray for us, Virgin most sorrowful.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Grant, we beseech you, O Lord Jesus Christ, that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, your Mother, may intercede for us before the throne of your mercy, now and at the hour of our death, whose most holy soul was transfixed with the sword of sorrow in the hour of your own Passion. Through you, Jesus Christ, Saviour of the World, who lives and reigns together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

(The Raccolta (1910) 221)

Prayer (5)

O Mary, the most desolate of all Mothers! What a terrible sword pierced your soul! Every blow inflicted on Jesus fell on you, all His sorrows crushed you, all His wounds tore you. But above all, the last farewell which He addressed to you re-opened all your wounds, and when you saw Him yield His last breath, what supernatural strength did it not require to sustain your soul!

Mother of love and of sorrow! Teach me how to love and to suffer after your example. Queen of Martyrs, give me a share in your martyrdom. Love has given you the cross. Pray that the cross may give me love, and if in order to love we must suffer and die, obtain for me the grace to love all that comes to me from the Heart of God, even sufferings and death. Amen.

(Contemplations and Meditations (1898) 45)

STABAT MATER

The Stabat Mater Dolorosa (The sorrowful mother stood) was written by the Franciscan friar Blessed Jacopone di Todi (Jacopo dei Benedetti, 1230–1306) and was inserted in the Roman Missal and Breviary in 1727 for the Feast of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Friday of Passion Week.

In Latin

Stabat mater dolorosa juxta Crucem lacrimosa, dum
pendebat Filius.

Cuius animam gementem, contristatam et dolentem
pertransivit gladius.

O quam tristis et afflicta fuit illa benedicta, mater Unigeniti!

Quae mœrebat et dolebat, pia Mater, dum videbat nati
pœnas inclyti.

Quis est homo qui non fleret, matrem Christi si videret in
tanto supplicio?

Quis non posset contristari Christi Matrem contemplari
dolentem cum Filio?

Pro peccatis suæ gentis vidit Iesum in tormentis, et flagellis
subditum.

Vidit suum dulcem Natum moriendo desolatum, dum emisit
spiritum.

Eia, Mater, fons amoris me sentire vim doloris fac, ut tecum
lugeam.

Fac, ut ardeat cor meum in amando Christum Deum ut sibi
complaceam.

Sancta Mater, istud agas, crucifixi fige plagas cordi meo
valide.

Tui Nati vulnerati, tam dignati pro me pati, pœnas mecum divide.

Fac me tecum pie flere, crucifixo condolere, donec ego vixero.

Juxta Crucem tecum stare, et me tibi sociare in planctu desidero.

Virgo virginum præclara, mihi iam non sis amara, fac me tecum plangere.

Fac, ut portem Christi mortem, passionis fac consortem, et plagas recolere.

Fac me plagis vulnerari, fac me Cruce inebriari, et cruore Filii.

Flammis ne urar succensus, per te, Virgo, sim defensus in die iudicii.

Christe, cum sit hinc exire, da per Matrem me venire ad palmam victoriæ.

Quando corpus morietur, fac, ut animæ donetur paradisi gloria. Amen.

In English

At the Cross her station keeping, stood the mournful Mother weeping, close to her Son to the last.

Through her heart, His sorrow sharing, all His bitter anguish bearing, now at length the sword has passed.

O how sad and sore distressed was that Mother, highly blessed, of the sole-begotten One.

Christ above in torment hangs, she beneath beholds the pangs of her dying glorious Son.

Is there one who would not weep, whelmed in miseries so deep, Christ's dear Mother to behold?

Can the human heart refrain from partaking in her pain, in that Mother's pain untold?

For the sins of His own nation, she saw Jesus wracked with torment, all with scourges rent. She beheld her tender Child, saw Him hang in desolation, till His spirit forth He sent.

O Mother! Fount of love! Touch my spirit from above, make my heart with your accord. Make me feel as you have felt. Make my soul to glow and melt with the love of Christ my Lord.

Holy Mother! Pierce me through, in my heart each wound renew, of my Saviour crucified. Let me share with you His pain, who for all my sins was slain, who for me in torments died.

Let me mingle tears with you, mourning Him who mourned for me, all the days that I may live. By the cross with you to stay, there with you to weep and pray, is all I ask of you to give.

Virgin of all virgins blessed, listen to my fond request. Let me share your grief divine. Let me, to my latest breath, in my body bear the death of that dying Son of thine.

Wounded with His every wound, steep my soul till it has swooned, in His very Blood away. Be to me, O Virgin, near, lest in flames I burn and die, in His awful Judgement Day.

Christ, when you will call me hence, by your Mother my defence, by your cross my victory, while my body here decays, may my soul your goodness praise, safe in Paradise with you.

THE LITANIES

Note: These litanies are only to be used for private devotion. They are not ecclesiastically approved for use in public.

Litany of the Seven Sorrows

Lord, *have mercy on us.*

Christ, *have mercy on us.*

Lord, *have mercy on us.*

Christ, *hear us.*

Christ, *graciously hear us.*

God the Father of heaven, *have mercy on us.*

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *have mercy on us.*

God the Holy Spirit, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Trinity, One God, *have mercy on us.*

Mother of Sorrows, *pray for us.*

You who found no room in the inn, *pray for us.*

Who lay your first-born in a manger, *pray for us.*

Who witnessed the circumcision of your Son, *pray for us.*

Who heard that your Son was set as a sign that should be contradicted, *pray for us.*

Who heard that your own soul should be pierced with a sword, *pray for us.*

Who fled into Egypt with your Son, *pray for us.*

Who grieved for the murder of the Innocents, *pray for us.*

Who for three days sought sorrowing your Son, lost in the Temple when He was twelve years old, *pray for us.*

Who noted the constant hatred of the Jews against Him, *pray for us.*

Who on the day of the Last Supper bid farewell to your Son going to Jerusalem to die, *pray for us.*

Who learnt that He was betrayed by Judas, and led away captive, *pray for us.*

Who saw Him delivered up as a malefactor by the chief priest, *pray for us.*

Who heard that He was falsely accused, *pray for us.*

Who learnt that His blessed face was struck, *pray for us.*

Who learnt that He was most cruelly treated by the Jews and the soldiers, *pray for us.*

Who heard your Son rejected for Barabbas, *pray for us.*

Who beheld Him beaten with scourges and crowned with thorns, *pray for us.*

Who heard sentence pronounced against Him, *pray for us.*

Who went to meet your Son loaded with the cross, *pray for us.*

Who saw His blessed hands and feet pierced with nails, *pray for us.*

Who received the last words of Jesus on the cross, *pray for us.*

Who stood by Him in His agony, *pray for us.*

Who received in your bosom the lifeless body of your Son taken down from the cross, *pray for us.*

Who after the body of Jesus was buried returned home all sad and desolate, *pray for us.*

Queen of Martyrs, *pray for us.*

Mirror of the afflicted, *pray for us.*

Comfort of the weak, *pray for us.*

Strength of the fearful, *pray for us.*

Refuge of sinners, *pray for us.*

Through the most bitter Passion and Death of your Son, *deliver us from sin and evil, O Queen of Martyrs.*

Through the most poignant sorrow of your heart, *deliver us, O Queen of Martyrs.*

Through your exceeding sadness and desolation, *deliver us, O Queen of Martyrs.*

Through your extreme anguish, *deliver us, O Queen of Martyrs.*

Through your groans and tears, *deliver us, O Queen of Martyrs.*

Through your maternal compassion, *deliver us, O Queen of Martyrs.*

Through your most powerful patronage, *deliver us, O Queen of Martyrs.*

From immoderate sadness, *deliver us, O Queen of Martyrs.*

From a pusillanimous spirit, *deliver us, O Queen of Martyrs.*

From every occasion and danger of sin, *deliver us, O Queen of Martyrs.*

From the snares of the devil, *deliver us, deliver us, O Queen of Martyrs.*

From hardness of heart, *deliver us, deliver us, O Queen of Martyrs.*

From impenitence, *deliver us, deliver us, O Queen of Martyrs.*

From sudden and unprovided death, *deliver us, O Queen of Martyrs.*

From eternal damnation, *deliver us, O Queen of Martyrs.*

We sinners, *beseech you hear us.*

That you would vouchsafe to preserve us by your patronage in true faith, hope and charity, *we beseech you hear us.*

That you would vouchsafe to obtain for us perfect sorrow and repentance for our sins, *we beseech you hear us.*

That you would vouchsafe to bring consolation and assistance to those who call on you, *we beseech you hear us.*

That you would vouchsafe to succour us in the agony of death, *we beseech you hear us.*

That you would vouchsafe to obtain for us a happy death, *we beseech you hear us.*

Mother of God, *we beseech you hear us.*

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, *spare us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, *graciously hear us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, *have mercy on us, O Lord.*

Christ, *hear us.*

Christ, *graciously hear us.*

Lord, *have mercy on us.*

Christ, *have mercy on us.*

Lord, *have mercy on us.*

V. In all our tribulations and afflictions.

R. Succour us, O Virgin Mary.

Let us pray. O afflicted Mother, write on my repentant heart your Seven Sorrows and the five bleeding Wounds which your dear Son bore, that I may read in it sorrow and true love. Sorrow, to endure for Jesus and you every sorrow, and

love, to despise every love for Him and you. Live, crucified Jesus and heartbroken Mary, forever and ever. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Manual of Devotions (1868) 132)

Litany of Our Lady of Sorrows

Lord, *have mercy on us.*

Christ, *have mercy on us.*

Lord, *have mercy on us.*

Christ, *hear us.*

Christ, *graciously hear us.*

God the Father of heaven, *have mercy on us.*

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *have mercy on us.*

God the Holy Spirit, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Trinity, One God, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Mary, *pray for us.*

Holy Mother of God, *pray for us.*

Holy Virgin of virgins, *pray for us.*

Crucified Mother, *pray for us.*

Sorrowful Mother, *pray for us.*

Tearful Mother, *pray for us.*

Afflicted Mother, *pray for us.*

Forsaken Mother, *pray for us.*

Desolate Mother, *pray for us.*

Mother bereft of your Son, *pray for us.*

Mother transfixed with the sword, *pray for us.*

Mother consumed with grief, *pray for us.*

Mother filled with anguish, *pray for us.*

Mother crucified in heart, *pray for us.*

Most most sad, *pray for us.*

Fountain of tears, *pray for us.*

Sea of suffering, *pray for us.*

Mirror of patience, *pray for us.*

Rock of constancy, *pray for us.*

Author of confidence, *pray for us.*

Refuge of the forsaken, *pray for us.*

Shield of the oppressed, *pray for us.*

Subduer of the unbelieving, *pray for us.*

Comfort of the wretched, *pray for us.*

Medicine of the sick, *pray for us.*

Strength of the weak, *pray for us.*

Harbour of the shipwrecked, *pray for us.*

Allayer of tempests, *pray for us.*

Resource of mourners, *pray for us.*

Terror of the treacherous, *pray for us.*

Treasure of the faithful, *pray for us.*

Eye of Prophets, *pray for us.*

Staff of Apostles, *pray for us.*

Crown of Martyrs, *pray for us.*

Light of Confessors, *pray for us.*

Pearl of Virgins, *pray for us.*

Consolation of Widows, *pray for us.*

Joy of all Saints, *pray for us.*

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, *spare us,
O Lord.*

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, *have mercy on us, O Lord.*

Look down on us, free us, and deliver us from all trouble, by the power of Jesus Christ. Amen.

O Most Holy Virgin, imprint your wounds in my heart, that I may read in it sorrow and love. Sorrow to endure every sorrow for you and love to despise every love for you.

Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Hail Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope.

To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.

To you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.

Turn then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed

fruit of your womb, Jesus.

O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Three Hail Marys.

Let us pray. O most afflicted Queen and Mother, by all you endured during the three long hours Jesus hung on the cross, but more especially by the bitter pains you underwent at the moment of His death, I supplicate you to engrave deeply on my heart His wounds and your sorrows, and when I come to die, prepare me by your presence and prayers to pass from this world of sorrow to a happy eternity. Amen.

(Pope Pius VII — St Joseph's Manual (1877) 631)

PART 2 — ROSARY OF THE SEVEN SORROWS

Introduction

The Rosary of the Seven Sorrows is also commonly known as the Chaplet of Seven Sorrows or the 'Servite Rosary.'

The Rosary consists of seven groups of seven beads (septaines), each group being separated by a single bead or a medal depicting the particular sorrow.

Each septaine of beads represents seven Hail Marys, and the single bead or medal represents one Our Father.

The Rosary begins with the sign of the cross and an act of contrition, followed by three Hail Marys in veneration for the tears Our Lady shed.

The Rosary Step-By-Step

The sign of the cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

V. O God, come to my assistance.

R. O Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Act of contrition

O Saviour, my sole and only love, see me before your divine presence, all confusion by reason of the many grievous injuries I have done you.

With my whole heart I ask your pardon for them, repenting of them out of pure love for you, and, at the thought of your great goodness, hating and loathing them above every other evil of this life.

Would that I had died a thousand times if ever I had offended you but now I am most firmly resolved to lose my life a thousand times rather than to offend you again.

My Jesus crucified, I firmly purpose to cleanse my soul forthwith by your most Precious Blood, in the sacrament of penance.

And you, most tender Virgin Mother of Mercy, and refuge of the sinner, by your bitter pains, obtain for me the pardon of

my sins.

Meanwhile, praying, in accordance with the wishes of so many holy Pontiffs, for the indulgences attached to this Rosary, I hope thereby to obtain remission of all the punishment due to my sins.

First bead - Hail Mary

In veneration for the tears Our Lady shed:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Second bead - Hail Mary

In veneration for the tears Our Lady shed:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Third bead - Hail Mary

In veneration for the tears Our Lady shed:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

First Sorrow - The prophecy of Simeon

Deliver, God, my soul from the sword.—Psalm xxi. 21



The first sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary was when she presented Jesus, her only-begotten Son, in the Temple, laid Him in the arms of holy old Simeon and heard His word of prophecy, “A sword will pierce your own soul,” which foretold the Passion and death of Her Son Jesus.

There was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of

Israel, and the Holy Spirit was in him. He had received an answer from the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by the Spirit into the Temple. When His parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he also took him into his arms, and blessed God and said, "Now you dismiss your servant, O Lord, according to your word in peace; because my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all peoples: a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." His father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning Him. Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be contradicted; and your own soul a sword will pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed."

(Luke ii. 25-35)

O most afflicted of all Virgins!

I feelingly commemorate the sorrow which filled your most compassionate heart when, on presenting your divine Son in the Temple, holy Simeon foretold that a sword should pierce your soul, thereby announcing the great share you should have in the sufferings of your dear Son.

I most devoutly compassionate your grief on this occasion and beseech you, O Immaculate Queen of Martyrs, to obtain for me, through the Passion of Jesus Christ, which was the cause of all your sorrows, a sincere and efficacious horror of sin, an ardent love of God, a practical devotion towards you, and the grace of final perseverance.

Dividing bead - Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

First bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Second bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Third bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fourth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fifth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Sixth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Seventh bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Second Sorrow - The flight into Egypt

Expectation of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble: why will you be a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man turning in to lodge? —Jeremiah xiv. 8



The second sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary was when she had to flee to Egypt on account of the persecution of cruel Herod, who impiously sought to slay her well-beloved Son.

An angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying, "Arise, and take the child and His mother, and flee to Egypt. And stay there until I tell you. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy Him." He arose and took the child and His mother by night, and retired into Egypt. And He remained there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the Prophet, saying: "Out of Egypt have I called my son."

(Matthew ii. 13-15)

O most afflicted and guiltless of all the daughters of Eve!

I feelingly compassionate the exceeding sorrow which filled your maternal heart when you saw your divine infant persecuted by His people, and were obliged to flee into Egypt, in order to save Him from the fury of Herod.

I most devoutly compassionate your grief on this occasion, and beseech you, O Immaculate Queen of Martyrs, to obtain for me, through the Passion of Jesus Christ, which was the cause of all your sorrows, a sincere and efficacious horror of sin, an ardent love of God, a practical devotion towards you, and the grace of a happy death.

Dividing bead - Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

First bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Second bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Third bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fourth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fifth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Sixth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Seventh bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Third Sorrow - The loss of the child Jesus in the Temple

By night I sought Him whom my soul loves. I sought Him, and found Him not. I will arise and go about the city: in the streets and broad places I will seek Him whom my soul loves. I sought Him, and found Him not. The watchmen who kept the city found me: Have you seen Him whom my soul loves? I found Him whom my soul loves; I held Him, and I will not let Him go.—
Canticle of Canticles iii. 1-4



The third sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary was when, after having gone up to Jerusalem, at the Passover with Joseph her spouse, and Jesus, her beloved Son, she missed Him while returning to her humble dwelling, and for three days bewailed the loss of her sole-beloved one.

His parents went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the Pasch, and when He was twelve years old, they going up into Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast, and having fulfilled the days, when they returned the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and His parents knew it not. Thinking that He was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought Him

among their relatives and acquaintances. Not finding Him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking Him. It came to pass that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, listening to them and asking them questions. All that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers. And seeing Him, they wondered. His mother said to Him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Behold your father and I have sought you sorrowing."

(Luke ii. 41-48)

O most sorrow-stricken Mother!

I feelingly compassionate those rivers of sorrow which inundated your maternal heart when you were separated from your adorable Son, who remained for three days absent from you after your journey to Jerusalem.

I most devoutly compassionate your grief on that occasion, and beseech you, O most gentle Queen of Martyrs, to obtain for me, through the Passion of Jesus Christ, which was the cause of all your sorrows, a sincere and efficacious horror of sin, an ardent love of God, a practical devotion towards you, and the favour of your assistance in my last hour.

Dividing bead - Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

First bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Second bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Third bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fourth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fifth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Sixth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Seventh bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fourth Sorrow - The meeting of Jesus and Mary on the road to Calvary

Who is it that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, the beautiful One in His robe, walking in the greatness of His strength? Why, then, is your apparel red? —Isaiah lxiii. 1-2



The fourth sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary was when she met her most loving Son Jesus carrying on His tender shoulders the heavy cross on which He was to be crucified for our salvation.

As they led him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him to carry after Jesus. There followed Him a great multitude of people and of women, who bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning to them said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me; but weep

for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days will come when they will say: 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that have not borne and the paps that have not given suck.' Then will they begin to say to the mountains: 'Fall on us.' And to the hills: 'Cover us.' For if in the green wood they do these things, what will be done in the dry."

(Luke xxiii. 26-31)

O most afflicted Virgin!

I feelingly commemorate the sorrow that filled your maternal heart when you followed your dear Son to Calvary, and beheld Him sinking under the weight of the cross and our sins.

I most devoutly compassionate your grief on that occasion, and beseech you, O glorious Queen of Martyrs, to obtain for me, through the Passion of Jesus Christ, which was the cause of all your sorrows, a sincere and efficacious horror of sin, an ardent love of God, a practical devotion towards you, and a happy death under your special protection.

Dividing bead - Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

First bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Second bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Third bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fourth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fifth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Sixth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Seventh bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fifth Sorrow - The crucifixion and death of Jesus

Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends, because the hand of the Lord has touched me.—
Job xix. 21



The fifth sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary was when she saw her Son Jesus raised on the tree of the cross and all His sacred body poured forth blood, and then, after three long hours of agony, beheld Him die.

Bearing His own cross, He went forth to the place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha. There they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the middle.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother and His mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore had seen His mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He said to His mother: "Woman, behold your son." After that, He said to the disciple: "Behold your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her to his own. Afterwards, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said: "I thirst." Now there was a vessel set there, full of vinegar. And they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to His mouth. Jesus therefore, when He had taken the vinegar, said: "It is consummated." And bowing His head, He gave up the spirit.

(John xix. 17-19, 25-30)

O most afflicted Virgin!

I feelingly commemorate the sorrow which filled your maternal heart when you stood by the cross of Jesus and witnessed all His torments, and saw Him at length expire for the sins of the world.

I devoutly compassionate your grief on that occasion, O glorious Queen of Martyrs, to obtain for me, through the Passion of Jesus Christ, which was the cause of all your sorrows, a sincere and efficacious horror of sin, an ardent love of God, a practical devotion towards you, and a happy death under your special protection.

Dividing bead - Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

First bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Second bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Third bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fourth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fifth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Sixth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Seventh bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Sixth Sorrow - The piercing of Jesus' side and descent from the cross

All you who pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like my sorrow.—Lamentations i. 12



The sixth sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary was when she saw the lance pierce the sacred side of Jesus, Her beloved Son, and then received His holy body taken down from the cross and laid in her stainless bosom.

Then the Jews (because it was the Parasceve), that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath day (for that was a great Sabbath day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with him. But after they came to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear opened His side, and immediately there came out blood and water. He that saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. And he knows that he said true, that you also may believe. For these things were done that the scripture might be fulfilled: "You will not break a bone of Him." And again another scripture says: "They will look on Him whom they have pierced."

(John xix. 31-37)

O most afflicted Virgin!

I feelingly commemorate the sorrow which filled your maternal heart when the adorable body of your divine Son was taken down from the cross and laid in your arms.

I devoutly compassionate your grief on that occasion, O glorious Queen of Martyrs, to obtain for me, through the Passion of Jesus Christ, which was the cause of all your sorrows, a sincere and efficacious horror of sin, an ardent love of God, a practical devotion towards you, and a happy death under your special protection.

Dividing bead - Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

First bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Second bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Third bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fourth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fifth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Sixth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Seventh bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Seventh Sorrow - The burial of Jesus in the sepulchre

Therefore do I weep, and my eyes run down with water because the Comforter, the Relief of my Soul, is far from me.—Lamentations i. 16



The seventh sorrow of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen and Advocate of us, her servants, miserable sinners, was when she saw the holy body of Her Son laid in the sepulchre.

There was a man named Joseph who was a counsellor, a good and a just man, (The same had not consented to their counsel and doings) of Arimathea, a city of Judea, who also himself looked for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. And taking Him down, he wrapped Him in fine linen and laid Him in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, in which no man had yet been laid. And it was the day of the

Parasceve, and the Sabbath drew on. The women that had come with Him from Galilee, following after, saw the sepulchre and how His body was laid. Returning, they prepared spices and ointments, and on the Sabbath day they rested, according to the Commandment.

(Luke xxiii. 50-56)

O most afflicted Virgin!

I feelingly commemorate the sorrow which filled your maternal heart when the sacred body of Jesus was taken from your arms and laid in the holy sepulchre.

I devoutly compassionate your grief on that occasion, O glorious Queen of Martyrs, to obtain for me, through the Passion of Jesus Christ, which was the cause of all your sorrows, a sincere and efficacious horror of sin, an ardent love of God, a practical devotion towards you, and the grace of final perseverance.

Dividing bead - Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

First bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Second bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Third bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fourth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Fifth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Sixth bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Seventh bead - Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Closing prayers

V. Pray for us, Virgin most sorrowful.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray. Grant, we beseech you, O Lord Jesus Christ, that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, your Mother, may intercede for us before the throne of your mercy, now, and at the hour of our death, through whose most holy soul, in the hour of your own passion, the sword of sorrow passed. Through you, Jesus Christ, Saviour of the world, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

Indulgences

The following indulgences attach to this Rosary:

Popes Benedict XIII (26th of September 1724), Clement XII (12th of December 1734), Pius IX (18th of July 1877) granted or confirmed the following indulgences.

1. An indulgence of 200 days for every Our Father and the same for every Hail Mary, to all faithful who, being truly penitent, after Confession, or at least with a firm purpose of going to Confession, will say this Rosary in a church of the Order of the Servants of Mary, or who will practise this devotion anywhere on Fridays, during Lent, and on the feast and during the Octave of Our Lady of Sorrows.
2. An indulgence of 100 days for each Our Father and each Hail Mary to those who will perform this pious exercise anywhere, on any day of the year.
3. An indulgence of 7 years and 7 quarantines to anyone who will say this Rosary, alone or in company with others.
4. An indulgence of 100 years to those who have received the Rosary directly from a religious of the Order of the Servants of Mary, every time that, being truly penitent, after Confession, or at least with a firm purpose of going to Confession, they will say it with devotion.
5. An indulgence of 150 years to who will say the Rosary on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and feasts of obligation, provided that, being truly penitent, after Confession, they will have received it directly from a religious of the Order of the Servants of Mary, and carry it about them.
6. An indulgence of 200 years to all the faithful who, having made an exact examination of conscience, being truly penitent, after Confession, will say this Rosary with devotion and pray for the intentions of the Holy Father.
7. An indulgence of 10 years to those who keep one of the Rosary about them, and say it frequently, every time that, being truly penitent, after Confession and Holy Communion, they will assist at Mass or hear a sermon with due attention, or accompany the Blessed Sacrament when carried to the sick, or reconcile enemies, or bring sinners to repentance, or say the Our Father and the Hail Mary 7 times, or do any spiritual or corporal works of mercy, in honour of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, or their patron saint.
8. A plenary indulgence, once a year, to all those who have the pious custom of saying the Rosary 4 times a week, on any day when, being

truly penitent, after Confession and Holy Communion, they will say it with devotion.

9. A plenary indulgence, once a month, to all those who will say the Rosary every day for a month, if, being truly penitent, after Confession and Holy Communion, they will pray for the intentions of the Holy Father.

As for the gaining of the indulgences, besides reciting the prescribed Our Fathers and Hail Marys, the mention and consideration of the principal Sorrows which the Blessed Virgin Mary suffered in the life and death of her divine Son is necessary, and for those who have not always the capacity for meditating, Pope Leo XIII (15 May 1886) permitted that the indulgences Numbers 1 to 4 and 7 and 9 may be gained by those of the faithful who, for whatever reason, in reciting the Rosary, do not apply themselves either to reading or meditating on the Seven Sorrows, provided however, that they comply with the other conditions imposed.

To obtain the above specified indulgences it is necessary that the Rosary should be blessed by the Superiors of the Order of the Servants of Mary, or by others of that Order deputed by these Superiors, and held in the hand while reciting it.

By a grant of Pope Leo XIII (8th of June 1898), where two or more persons recite the Rosary together one may hold it and the others, putting aside anything that would interfere with interior recollection, may thus unite in prayer with the holding the Rosary.

These Rosaries may also be blessed by other priests holding special faculties, but in that case the faithful cannot gain indulgences Numbers 4 and 5.

(The New Raccolta (1903) 222)

PART 3 - REFLECTIONS ON THE SEVEN SORROWS BY SAINT ALPHONSUS

The First Sorrow - The prophecy of Simeon

Reflection

In this valley of tears, every man is born to weep, and everyone must suffer those afflictions that daily befall him. But how much more miserable would life be if everyone knew also the future evils which are to afflict him!

“Too unhappy would he be,” says Seneca, whose fate was such. The Lord exercises His compassion towards us, namely, that He does not make known to us the crosses that await us. That if we are to suffer them, at least we may suffer them only once.

But He did not exercise this compassion with Mary, who, because God wished her to be the Queen of Sorrows, and in all things like His Son, and to see always before her eyes, and to suffer continually all the sorrows that awaited her, and those were the sufferings of the Passion and death of her beloved Jesus.

For Saint Simeon in the temple, after having received the divine child in his arms, predicted to her that this child was to be the mark for all the opposition and persecution of men, “Set for a sign which will be contradicted” and that therefore the sword of sorrow should pierce her soul: “And your own soul a sword will pierce.”

The holy Virgin herself said to Saint Matilda that at the announcement of Saint Simeon all her joy was changed into sorrow. For, as it was revealed to Saint Theresa, the Blessed Mother, although she knew before this that the life of her Son would be sacrificed for the salvation of the world, yet

she then learned more particularly and distinctly the sufferings and cruel death that awaited her poor Son.

She knew that he would be contradicted in all things.

Contradicted in doctrine, for instead of being believed, He would be esteemed a blasphemer for teaching that He was the Son of God, as the impious Caiaphas declared Him to be, saying: "He has blasphemed, he is guilty of death."

Contradicted in His reputation, for He was noble, of royal lineage, and was despised as a peasant: "Is not this the carpenter's son?" "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" He was wisdom itself, and was treated as an ignorant man: "How does this man know letters, having never learned?"

As a false prophet: "And they blindfolded Him and smote His face... saying: "Prophecy who is this that struck you."

He was treated as a madman: "He is mad, why hear you him?"

As a wine-bibber, a glutton, and a friend of sinners: "Behold a man that is a glutton, and a drinker of wine, a friend of publicans and sinners."

As a sorcerer: "By the prince of devils he casts out devils."

As a heretic and possessed person: "Do we not say well of you, that you are a Samaritan, and have a devil?"

In a word, Jesus was considered as so bad and notorious a man, that no trial was necessary to condemn Him, as the Jews said to Pilate: "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to you."

He was contradicted in His soul, for even His Eternal Father, in order to give place to the divine justice, contradicted Him by not wishing to hear Him when He prayed to Him, saying: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me" and abandoned Him to fear, weariness and sadness, so that our

afflicted Lord said: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." His interior suffering even caused Him to sweat blood.

Contradicted and persecuted, in a word, in His body and in His life, for He was tortured in all His sacred members. In His hands, in His feet, in His face, and in His head, in His whole body, till, drained to the last drop of His blood, He died an ignominious death on the cross.

When David, in the midst of all his pleasures and royal grandeur heard from Nathan the prophet, that his son should die, "The child that is born to you will surely die" he could find no peace, but wept, fasted and slept on the ground.

Mary received with the greatest calmness the announcement that her Son should die, and peacefully continued to submit to it, but what grief she must have continually suffered, seeing this amiable Son always near her, hearing from Him words of eternal life and beholding His holy demeanour.

Abraham suffered great affliction during the three days he passed with his beloved Isaac, after he knew that he was to lose him.

Oh God! Not for three days, but for thirty-three years, Mary had to endure a similar sorrow. Similar, do I say? A sorrow as much greater as the Son of Mary was more lovely than the son of Abraham.

The blessed Virgin herself revealed to Saint Bridget that while she lived on the earth there was not an hour when this grief did not pierce her soul. "As often," she continued, "as I looked on my Son, as often as I wrapped Him in His swaddling clothes, as often as I saw His hands and His feet, so often was my soul overwhelmed as it were with a fresh sorrow, because I considered how He would be crucified."

Rupert the Abbot, contemplating Mary while she was suckling her Son, imagines her addressing Him in these words: "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, he will abide between my breasts. Ah, my Son, I clasp you in my arms, because you are so dear to me, but the dearer you are to me, the more you become to me a bundle of myrrh and of sorrow, when I think of your sufferings."

Mary, says Saint Bernardino of Siena, considered that the strength of the saints was to pass through death, the beauty of Paradise to be deformed, the Lord of the universe to be bound as a criminal, the Creator of all things to be livid with stripes, the Judge of all to be condemned, the glory of heaven despised, the King of kings to be crowned with thorns, and treated as a mock king.

Father Engelgrave writes that it was revealed to the same Saint Bridget that the afflicted Mother, knowing all that her Son would have to suffer, suckling Him, thought of the gall and vinegar when she swathed Him, of the cords with which He was to be bound when she bore Him in her arms, of Him being nailed to the cross, and when He slept, she thought of His death.

As often as she put on Him His clothes, she reflected that they would one day be torn from Him, that He might be crucified, and when she beheld His sacred hands and feet, and thought of the nails that were to pierce them, as Mary said to Saint Bridget: "My eyes filled with tears, and my heart was tortured with grief."

The Evangelist says that as Jesus Christ advanced in years, so also He advanced in wisdom and in grace with God and men. That is, He advanced in wisdom and in grace before men or in their estimation, and before God, according to Saint Thomas, inasmuch as all His works would continually have availed to increase His merit, if from the beginning

grace in its complete fullness had not been conferred on Him by virtue of the hypostatic union.

But if Jesus advanced in the esteem and love of others, how much more did He advance in Mary's love! But O God, as love increased in her, the more increased in her the grief of having to lose Him by a death so cruel.

And the nearer the time of the Passion of her Son approached, with so much greater pain did that sword of sorrow predicted by Saint Simeon pierce the heart of the Mother. Precisely this the angel revealed to Saint Bridget, saying: "That sword of sorrow was every hour drawing nearer to the Virgin as the time for the Passion of her Son drew nearer."

If, then, Jesus our King and His most holy Mother did not refuse, for love of us, to suffer during their whole life such cruel pains, there is no reason that we should complain if we suffer a little.

Jesus crucified once appeared to sister Magdalene Orsini, a Dominican nun, when she had been long suffering a great trial, and encouraged her to remain with Him on the cross with that sorrow that was afflicting her. Sister Magdalene answered Him complainingly: "Oh Lord, you did suffer on the cross only three hours, but it is more than three years that I have been suffering this cross." Then the Redeemer replied: "Ah, ignorant soul, what do you say? I, from the first moment I was conceived, suffered in heart what I afterwards suffered on the cross."

If, then, we too suffer any affliction and complain, let us imagine that Jesus and His Mother Mary are saying to us the same words.

Example

Father Roviglione of the Company of Jesus relates that a certain youth practised the devotion of visiting every day an image of the sorrowful Mary, in which she was represented with seven swords piercing her heart.

One night the unhappy youth fell into mortal sin. Going next morning to visit the image, he saw in the heart of the blessed Virgin not only seven, but eight swords.

As he stood gazing at this, he heard a voice saying to him that this sin had added the eighth sword to the heart of Mary.

This softened his hard heart. He went immediately to Confession, and through the intercession of his advocate, recovered the divine grace.

Prayer

Oh my Blessed Mother, not one sword only, but as many swords as I have committed sins have I added to those seven in your heart.

Ah, my Lady, your sorrows are not due to you who are innocent, but to me who am guilty.

But since you have wished to suffer so much for me, by your merits obtain for me great sorrow for my sins, and patience under the trials of this life, which will always be light in comparison with my demerits, for I have often merited hell. Amen.

The Second Sorrow - The flight into Egypt

Reflection

As the stag wounded by an arrow carries the pain with him wherever he goes, because he carries with him the arrow that has wounded him, thus the divine Mother, after the prophecy of Saint Simeon, as we saw in our consideration of the first grief, always carried her sorrow with her by the continual remembrance of the Passion of her Son.

Ailgrin, explaining this passage of the Canticles, “the hairs of your head as the purple of the king bound in the channel,” says “these hairs of Mary were her continual thoughts of the Passion of Jesus, which kept always before her eyes the blood which was one day to flow from His wounds. Your mind Mary, and your thoughts tinged in the blood of the Passion of our Lord, were always moved with sorrow as if they actually saw the blood flowing from His wounds.”

Thus her Son Himself was that arrow in the heart of Mary, who, the more worthy of love He showed Himself to her, always wounded her the more with the sorrowful thought that she should lose Him by so cruel a death.

Let us now pass to the consideration of the second sword of sorrow which wounded Mary in the flight of her infant Jesus into Egypt from the persecution of Herod.

Herod having heard that the expected Messiah was born, foolishly feared that the new-born king would deprive him of his kingdom. Hence Saint Fulgentius, reproving him for his folly, thus says: “Why Herod are you thus disturbed? This

king who is born has not come to conquer kings by arms, but to subjugate them, in a wonderful manner, by His death.”

The impious Herod, therefore, waited to learn from the holy Magi where the king was born, that he might take from Him His life, but finding himself deceived by the Magi, ordered all the infants that could be found in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem to be put to death. But an angel appeared in a dream to Saint Joseph, and said to him: “Arise, and take the child and His mother, and flee into Egypt.”

According to Gerson, immediately on that very night Joseph made this command known to Mary, and taking the infant Jesus, they commenced their journey, as it seems clearly from the Gospel itself: “Who arose and took the child and His mother by night and retired into Egypt.”

O God, as blessed Albertus Magnus says in the name of Mary, must He, then, who came to save men flee from men? “*Debet fugere qui salvator est mundi?*” And then the afflicted Mary knew that already the prophecy of Simeon regarding her Son was beginning to be verified: “He is set for a sign which will be contradicted.”

Seeing that scarcely is He born, when He is persecuted to death. “What suffering it must have been to the heart of Mary,” writes Saint John Chrysostom, “to hear the tidings of that cruel exile of herself with her Son! Flee from your friends to strangers, from the holy Temple of the only true God, to the temples of demons. What greater tribulation than that a new-born child, clinging to its mother’s bosom, should be forced to flee with the mother herself!”

Everyone can imagine how much Mary must have suffered on this journey. It was a long distance to Egypt. Authors generally agree with Barrada that it was four hundred miles, so that at least it was a journey of thirty days.

The way, as Saint Bonaventure describes it, was rough, unknown, through woods, and little frequented. The season

was winter, and therefore they had to travel in snow, rain, wind and storms, and through bad and difficult roads. Mary was then fifteen years of age, a delicate virgin, unaccustomed to such journeys. They had no servant to attend them.

Joseph and Mary, said Saint Peter Chrysologus, had no man-servant nor maid-servant. They were themselves both masters and servants. O God, how piteous a spectacle it was to see that tender Virgin, with that newly born infant in her arms wandering through this world!

Saint Bonaventure asks, Where did they obtain food? Where did they rest at night? How were they lodged? What other food could they have, than a piece of hard bread which Joseph brought with him or begged in charity? Where could they have slept (particularly in the two hundred miles of desert through which they travelled, where, as authors relate, there were neither houses nor inns) except on the sand, or under some tree in the wood, in the open air, exposed to robbers, or those wild beasts with which Egypt abounded?

If anyone had met these three greatest personages of the world, what would he have believed them to be but three poor, roving beggars?

They lived in Egypt, according to Brocard and Jansenius, in a district called Matures, though, according to Saint Anselm, they dwelt in Heliopolis, first called Memphis, and now Cairo. And here let us consider the great poverty they must have suffered for the seven years they were there, as Saint Antoninus, Saint Thomas and others assert, they were foreigners, unknown, without revenues, without money, without kin. Hardly were they able to support themselves by their humble labours.

As they were destitute, says Saint Basil, it is manifest what effort they must have made to obtain there the necessities

of life. Moreover, Ludolph of Saxony has written, and let it be repeated for the consolation of the poor, that so great was the poverty of Mary there, that sometimes she had not so much as a morsel of bread, when her Son, forced by hunger, asked it of her. Saint Matthew also relates that when Herod was dead, the angel again appeared, in a dream, to Saint Joseph, and directed him to return to Judea.

Saint Bonaventure, speaking of His return, considers the greater pain of the blessed Virgin, on account of the sufferings which Jesus must have endured in that journey, having arrived at about the age of seven years an age, says the saint, when He was so large that He could not be carried, and so small that He could not go without assistance.

The sight, then, of Jesus and Mary wandering like fugitives through this world, teaches us that we should also live as pilgrims on the earth, detached from the goods which the world offers us, as having soon to leave them and go to eternity.

“We have not here a lasting city, but seek one that is to come.” To which Saint Augustine adds: You are a stranger, you give a look, and then pass on: *“Hospes es, vides et transis.”*

It also teaches us to embrace crosses, for we cannot live in this world without a cross. The blessed Veronica da Binasco, an Augustinian nun, was carried in spirit to accompany Mary and the infant Jesus in this journey to Egypt, and at the end of it the divine Mother said to her: “Child, have you seen through what difficulties we have reached this place? Now learn that no-one receives graces without suffering.” He who wishes to feel least the sufferings of this life, must take Jesus and Mary with him: *“Accipe puerum et matrem ejus.”*

For him who lovingly bears in his heart this Son and this Mother, all sufferings become light, and even sweet and dear. Let us then love them, let us console Mary by receiving

her Son within our hearts, whom, even now, men continue to persecute with their sins.

Example

One day the most holy Mary appeared to that blessed Colletta, a Franciscan nun, and showed her the infant Jesus in a basin, torn in pieces, and then said to her: "Thus sinners continually treat my Son, renewing His death and my sorrows. My daughter, pray for them that they may be converted."

Similar to this is that other vision which appeared to the venerable Sister Jane of Jesus and Mary, also a Franciscan nun. As she was one day meditating on the infant Jesus, persecuted by Herod, she heard a great noise, as of armed people, who were pursuing someone. And then appeared before her a most beautiful child who was fleeing in great distress and cried to her: "My Jane, help me, hide me. I am Jesus of Nazareth, I am fleeing from sinners who wish to kill me, and who persecute me as Herod did. Save me."

Prayer

Then, O Mary, even after your Son has died by the hands of men who persecuted Him to death, have not these ungrateful men yet ceased from persecuting Him with their sins, and continuing to afflict you, Mother of Sorrows?

And I also, O God, have been one of these.

My most sweet Mother, obtain for me tears to weep for such ingratitude.

And then, by the sufferings you experienced in the journey to Egypt, assist me in the journey that I am making to

eternity, that at length I may go to unite with you in loving my persecuted Saviour, in the country of the blessed. Amen.

The Third Sorrow - The loss of the child Jesus in the Temple

Reflection

Saint James the Apostle said that our perfection consists in the virtue of patience. "And patience has a perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing."

The Lord having then given us the Virgin Mary as an example of perfection, it was necessary that she should be laden with sorrows, that in her we might admire and imitate her heroic patience.

The sorrow that we are this day to consider is one of the greatest which our divine Mother suffered during her life, namely, the loss of her Son in the Temple.

He who is born blind is little sensible of the pain of being deprived of the light of day, but to him who has once had sight and enjoyed the light, it is a great sorrow to find himself deprived of it by blindness.

And thus it is with those unhappy souls who, being blinded by the mire of this earth, have but little knowledge of God, and therefore scarcely feel pain at not finding Him.

On the contrary, the man who, illuminated with celestial light, has been made worthy to find by love the sweet presence of the highest good, O God, how he mourns when he finds himself deprived of it!

From this we can judge how painful must have been to Mary, who was accustomed to enjoy constantly the sweet presence of Jesus, that third sword which wounded her, when she lost

Him in Jerusalem, and was separated from Him for three days.

In the Second Chapter of Saint Luke we read that the blessed Virgin, being accustomed to visit the Temple every year at the Paschal season, with Joseph her spouse and Jesus, once went when He was about twelve years old, and Jesus remained in Jerusalem, though she was not aware of it for she thought He was in company with others. When she reached Nazareth she inquired for her Son, and not finding Him there, she returned immediately to Jerusalem to seek Him, but did not succeed until after three days.

Now let us imagine what distress that afflicted Mother must have experienced in those three days in which she was searching everywhere for her Son, with the spouse in the Canticles: "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?" But she could hear no tidings of him. O with how much greater tenderness must Mary, overcome with fatigue, and yet not having found her beloved Son, have repeated those words of Ruben concerning his brother Joseph: The boy does not appear, and where will I go? "*Puer non comparet, et ego quo ibo?*"

My Jesus does not appear, and I know not what to do that I may find Him, but where will I go without my treasure? Weeping continually, she repeated during these three days with David: "My tears have been my bread day and night, while it is said to me daily, Where is your God?"

Therefore Pelbart with reason says that during those nights the afflicted Mother had no rest, but wept and prayed without ceasing to God, that He would enable her to find her Son. And, according to Saint Bernard, often during that time did she repeat to her Son Himself the words of the spouse: "Show me where you feed, where you lie in the midday, lest I begin to wander."

My Son, tell me where you are, that I may no longer wander, seeking you in vain.

Some writers assert, and not without reason, that this sorrow was not only one of the greatest, but that it was the greatest and most painful of all. For in the first place, Mary in her other sorrows had Jesus with her. She suffered when Saint Simeon uttered the prophecy in the Temple. She suffered in the flight to Egypt, but always with Jesus, but in this sorrow she suffered at a distance from Jesus, without knowing where he was: "And the light of my eyes itself is not with me."

Thus, with tears, she then exclaimed: "Ah, the light of my eyes, my dear Jesus, is no more with me. He is far from me, I know not where He is!" Origen says that though the love which this holy Mother bore her Son, she suffered more at this loss of Jesus than any martyr ever suffered at death.

O how long were these three days for Mary! They appeared three ages. Very bitter days, for there was none to comfort her. "And who," she exclaimed with Jeremiah, "who can console me if He who could console me is far from me? And therefore my eyes are not satisfied with weeping. Therefore do I weep, and my eyes run down with water, because the comforter is far from me." And with Tobias she repeated, "What manner of joy will be to me who sit in darkness, and see not the light of heaven?"

Secondly, Mary well understood the cause and end of the other sorrows, namely, the redemption of the world, the Divine Will, but in this she did not know the cause of the absence of her Son.

The sorrowful Mother was grieved to find Jesus withdrawn from her, for her humility, says Lanspergius, made her consider herself unworthy to remain with Him any longer, and attend on Him on earth, and have the care of such a

treasure. And perhaps, she may have thought within herself, I have not served Him as I ought.

Perhaps I have been guilty of some neglect, and therefore he has left me. They sought Him, lest he perhaps had left them, as Origen said.

Certainly there is no greater grief for a soul that loves God than the fear of having displeased Him. And therefore Mary never complained in any other sorrow but this, lovingly expostulating with Jesus after she found Him: "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have sought you sorrowing."

By these words she did not wish to reprove Jesus, as the heretics blasphemously assert, but only to make known to Him the grief she had experienced during His absence from her, on account of the love she bore Him. It was not a rebuke, says blessed Denis the Carthusian, but a loving complaint: "*Non erat increpatio, sed amorosa conquestio.*"

Finally, this sword so cruelly pierced the heart of the Virgin, that the blessed Benvenuta, desiring one day to share the pain of the holy Mother in this sorrow, and praying her to obtain for her this grace, Mary appeared to her with the infant Jesus in her arms; but while Benvenuta was enjoying the sight of that most beautiful child, in one moment she was deprived of it. So great was her sorrow that she had recourse to Mary, to implore her pity that it should not make her die of grief. The holy Virgin appeared to her again three days later and said to her: "Now learn, my daughter, that your sorrow is but a small part of that which I suffered when I lost my Son."

This sorrow of Mary ought, in the first place, to serve as a comfort to those souls who are desolate and do not enjoy the sweet presence they once enjoyed of their Lord. They may weep, but let them weep in peace, as Mary wept in the absence of her Son. Let them take courage, and not fear that

on this account they have lost the divine favour, for God himself said to Saint Theresa: "No-one is lost without knowing it, and no-one is deceived without wishing to be deceived."

If the Lord departs from the sight of that soul who loves Him, He does not therefore depart from the heart. He often hides Himself that she may seek Him with greater desire and love.

But those who would find Jesus must seek Him, not amid the delights and pleasures of the world, but amid crosses and mortifications, as Mary sought Him: We sought you sorrowing, as she said to her Son: "*Dolentes quasrebamus te?*" Learn from Mary to seek Jesus, says Origen, "*Disce a Maria quaerere Jesum.*"

Moreover, in this world we should seek no other good than Jesus. Job was not unhappy when he lost all that he possessed on earth; riches, children, health and honours, and even descended from a throne to a dunghill, but because he had God with him, even then he was happy. Saint Augustine, speaking of him, says: He had lost all that God had given him, but he had God Himself. "*Perdiderat ilia quae dederat Deus, sed habebat ipsum Deum.*"

Unhappy and truly wretched are those souls who have lost God. If Mary wept for the absence of her Son for three days, how ought sinners to weep who have lost divine grace, to whom God says: "You are not my people, and I will not be yours."

For sin does this, namely, it separates the soul from God: "Your iniquities have divided between you and your God." Hence, if even sinners possess all the goods of earth and have lost God, every thing on earth becomes vanity and affliction to them, as Solomon confessed: Behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

But as Saint Augustine says: The greatest misfortune of these poor blind souls is that if they lose an ox, they do not

fail to go in search of it. If they lose a sheep, they use all diligence to find it. If they lose a beast of burden, they cannot rest. But they lose the highest good, which is God, and yet they eat and drink and take their rest.

Example

We read in the Annual Letters of the Society of Jesus that in India a young man who was just leaving his apartment in order to commit sin, heard a voice saying: "Stop, where are you going?"

He turned round and saw an image, in relief, of the sorrowful Mary, who drew out the sword which was in her breast, and said to him: "Take this dagger and pierce my heart rather than wound my Son with this sin."

At the sound of these words the youth prostrated himself on the ground, and with deep contrition, bursting into tears, he asked and obtained from God and the Virgin pardon of his sin.

Prayer

O blessed Virgin, why you are afflicted, seeking your lost Son? Is it because you do not know where He is? But do you not know that He is in your heart? Do you not see that He is feeding among the lilies? You yourself have said it: "My beloved to me and I to Him who feeds among the lilies."

These, your humble, pure, and holy thoughts and affections, are all lilies, that invite the divine spouse to dwell with you.

Ah Mary, do you sigh after Jesus, you who loves none but Jesus? Leave sighing to me and so many other sinners who do not love Him, and who have lost Him by offending Him.

My most amiable Mother, if through my fault your Son has not yet returned to my soul, will you obtain for me that I may find Him.

I know well that he allows Himself to be found by all who seek Him: The Lord is good to the soul that seeks him: *"Bonus est Dominus... animae quaerenti illum."*

Make me seek Him as I ought to seek Him. You are the gate through which all find Jesus. Through you I too hope to find Him.

The Fourth Sorrow - The meeting of Jesus and Mary on the way to Calvary

Reflection

Saint Bernadine says that to form an idea of the grief of Mary in losing her Jesus by death, it is necessary to consider the love that this Mother bore to this her Son. All mothers feel the sufferings of their children as their own. Hence the woman of Canaan, when she prayed the Saviour to deliver her daughter from the devil that tormented her, said to Him that He should have pity on the mother rather than on the daughter: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, you son of David, my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil."

But what mother ever loved a child so much as Mary loved Jesus? He was her only child, reared amid so many troubles and pains; a most amiable child, and most loving to His Mother — a son who was at the same time her Son and her God, who came on earth to kindle in the hearts of all the holy fire of divine love, as He himself declared: "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?"

Let us consider how He must have inflamed that pure heart of His holy Mother, so free from every earthly affection. In a word, the blessed Virgin herself said to Saint Bridget that through love her heart and the heart of her Son was one: "*Unum erat cor meum, et cor filii mei.*" That blending of handmaid and mother, of Son and God, kindled in the heart of Mary a fire composed of a thousand flames. But afterwards, at the time of the Passion, this flame of love was changed into a sea of sorrow.

Hence Saint Bernardine of Siena says that all the sorrows of the world united would not be equal to the sorrow of the glorious Mary. Yes, because this Mother, as Saint Lawrence Justinian writes: "The more tenderly she loved, was the more deeply wounded. The greater the tenderness with which she loved Him, the greater was her grief at the sight of His sufferings, especially when she met her Son, after He had already been condemned, going to death at the place of punishment, bearing the cross."

And this is the fourth sword of sorrow which today we have to consider.

The blessed Virgin revealed to Saint Bridget that at the time when the Passion of our Lord was drawing near her eyes were always filled with tears, as she thought of her beloved Son whom she was about to lose on this earth. Therefore, as she also said, a cold sweat covered her body from the fear that seized her at that prospect of approaching suffering. Behold, the appointed day at length arrived, and Jesus came in tears to take leave of His Mother before He went to death.

Saint Bonaventure, contemplating Mary on that night, says "You spent it without sleep, and while others slept, you remained watching. Morning having arrived, the disciples of Jesus Christ came to this afflicted Mother, one, to bring her this tidings, another, that, but all tidings of sorrow, for in her were then verified the words of Jeremiah: 'Weeping, she has wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. There is none to comfort her of all them that were dear to her.'"

One came to relate to her the cruel treatment of her Son in the house of Caiphas. Another, the insults received by Him from Herod. Finally, for I omit the rest to come to my point, Saint John came and announced to Mary that the most unjust Pilate had already condemned Him to death on the cross. I say the most unjust, for, as Saint Leo remarks, this

unjust judge condemned Him to death with the same lips with which he had pronounced Him innocent.

Ah, sorrowful Mother, said Saint John to her, your Son has already been condemned to death, He is already on His way, bearing Himself His cross on His way to Calvary, as He afterwards related in His Gospel: "And bearing His own cross He went forth to that place which is called Calvary." Come, if you desire to see Him and bid Him a last farewell in some of the streets through which He is to pass.

Mary goes with Saint John, and she perceives by the blood with which the way was sprinkled, that her Son had already passed there. This she revealed to Saint Bridget: "By the footsteps of my Son I traced His course, for along the way by which He had passed, the ground was sprinkled with blood."

Saint Bonaventure imagines the afflicted Mother taking a shorter way, and placing herself at the corner of the street to meet her afflicted Son as He passed by. This most afflicted Mother met her most afflicted Son: *Maestissima mater mcestissimo filio occurrit*, said Saint Bernard. While Mary stopped in that place how much she must have heard said against her Son by the Jews who knew her, and perhaps also words in mockery of herself!

Alas, what a commencement of sorrows was then before her eyes, when she saw the nails, the hammers, the cords, the fatal instruments of the death of her Son borne before Him! And what a sword pierced her heart when she heard the trumpet proclaiming along the way the sentence pronounced against her Son!

But behold, now, after the instruments, the trumpet and the ministers of justice had passed, she raises her eyes and sees; she sees, O God, a young man covered with blood and wounds from head to foot, with a crown of thorns on His head, and two heavy beams on His shoulders. She looks at

Him and hardly knows Him, saying, then with Isaiah: "And we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness."

Yes, for the wounds, the bruises and clotted blood made him look like a leper. "We have thought Him, as it were, a leper" so that He could no longer be recognised. "And His look was, as it were, hidden and despised, upon which we esteemed Him not." But at length love recognises Him, and as soon as she knows Him, ah, what was then, as Saint Peter of Alcantara says in his meditations, the love and fear of the heart of Mary!

On the one hand she desired to see Him. On the other she could not endure to look on so pitiable a sight. But at length they look at each other. The Son wipes from His eyes the clotted blood, which prevented Him from seeing (as was revealed to Saint Bridget), and looks on the Mother. The Mother looks on the Son. Ah, looks of sorrow, which pierced, as with so many arrows, those two holy and loving souls.

When Margaret, the daughter of Sir Thomas More, met her father on his way to the scaffold, she could utter only two words, "O, father! O, father!" and fell fainting at his feet. At the sight of her Son going to Calvary, Mary fainted not because it was not fitting that his Mother should lose the use of her reason, as Father Suarez remarks, neither did she die, for God reserved her for a greater grief, but if she did not die, she suffered sorrow enough to cause her a thousand deaths.

The Mother wished to embrace Him, as Saint Anselm says, but the officers of justice thrust her aside, loading her with insults, and urge onward our afflicted Lord. Mary follows. Ah, holy Virgin, where are you going? To Calvary! And can you trust yourself to see Him who is your life hanging from a cross? And your life will be as it were hanging before you: "*Erit vita tua quasi pendens ante te.*"

“Ah, my Mother, stop,” says Saint Lawrence Justinian, as if the Son Himself had then spoken to her, where do you hasten? Where are you going? If you come where I go, you will be tortured with my sufferings, and I with yours.

But although the sight of her dying Jesus must cost her such cruel anguish, the loving Mary will not leave Him. The Son goes before, and the Mother follows, that she may be crucified with her Son, as William the Abbot says: The Mother took up her cross, and followed Him, that she might be crucified with Him.

We even pity the wild beasts: “*Ferarum etiam miseremur*,” as Saint John Chrysostom has said. If we should see a lioness following her whelp as he was led to death, even this wild beast would call forth our compassion. And will we not feel compassion to see Mary following her immaculate Lamb, as they are leading Him to death? Let us then pity her and endeavour also ourselves to accompany her Son and herself, bearing with patience the cross which the Lord imposes on us.

Why did Jesus Christ, asks Saint John Chrysostom, desire to be alone in His other sufferings, but in bearing the cross wished to be helped by the Cyrenean? And he answers: That you may understand that the cross of Christ is not sufficient without yours. The cross alone of Jesus is not enough to save us, if we do not bear with resignation also our own, even unto death.

Example

The Saviour appeared one day to sister Diomira, a nun, in Florence, and said to her: “Think of me, and love me, and I will think of you, and love you,” and at the same time He presented her with a bunch of flowers and cross, signifying

to her by this that the consolations of the saints on this earth are always to be accompanied by the cross. The cross unites souls to God.

Blessed Jerome Emilian, when he was a soldier and leading a very sinful life, was shut up by his enemies in a tower. There, feeling deeply his misfortune, and enlightened by God to amend his life, he had recourse to the most holy Mary, and then with the help of this divine Mother, he began to live the life of a saint. By this he merited to see once in Heaven the high place which God had prepared for him. He became founder of the order of Sommaschi, died a saint, and has been lately beatified by the holy Church.

Prayer

My sorrowful Mother, by the merit of that grief which you felt seeing your beloved Jesus led to death, obtain for me the grace also to bear with patience those crosses which God sends me.

Happy me, if I also will know how to accompany you with my cross to death. You and Jesus, both innocent, have borne a heavy cross; and will I a sinner, who have merited Hell, refuse mine?

All, Immaculate Virgin, I hope that you will help me to bear my crosses with patience. Amen.

The Fifth Sorrow - The crucifixion and death of Jesus

Reflection

And now we have to admire a new sort of martyrdom, a mother condemned to see an innocent son, whom she loved with all the affection of her heart, put to death before her eyes, by the most barbarous tortures. There stood by the cross of Jesus His Mother: "*Stabat autem juxta crucem mater ejus.*"

There is nothing more to be said, says Saint John, of the martyrdom of Mary. Behold her at the foot of the cross, looking on her dying Son, and then see if there is grief like her grief.

Let us stop then also today on Calvary, to consider this fifth sword that pierced the heart of Mary, namely, the death of Jesus.

As soon as our afflicted Redeemer had ascended the hill of Calvary, the executioners stripped Him of His garments, and piercing His sacred hands and feet with nails, not sharp, but blunt: "*Non acutis, sed obtusis,*" as Saint Bernard says, and to torture Him more, they fastened Him to the cross.

When they had crucified Him, they planted the cross and thus left Him to die. The executioners abandon Him, but Mary does not abandon Him. She then draws nearer to the cross, in order to assist at His death. "I did not leave Him," thus the blessed Virgin revealed to Saint Bridget, "and stood nearer to His cross."

But what did it avail, O Lady, says Saint Bonaventure, to go to Calvary to witness there the death of this Son? Shame should have prevented you, for His disgrace was also yours, because you were His Mother or, at least, the horror of such a crime as that of seeing a God crucified by His own creatures, should have prevented you. But the saint himself answers: Your heart did not consider the horror, but the suffering: *"Non considerabat cor tuum horrorem, sed dolorem."*

Your heart did not then care for its own sorrow, but for the suffering and death of your dear Son, and therefore you yourself wished to be near Him, at least to compassionate Him. Ah, true Mother, says William the Abbot, loving Mother, for not even the terror of death could separate you from your beloved Son!

But O God, what a spectacle of sorrow to see this Son then in agony on the cross, and under the cross this Mother in agony, who was suffering all the pain that her Son was suffering!

Behold the words in which Mary revealed to Saint Bridget the pitiable state of her dying Son, as she saw Him on the cross: "My dear Jesus was on the cross in grief and in agony. His eyes were sunken, half closed and lifeless. The lips hanging and the mouth open. The cheeks hollow and attached to the teeth. The face lengthened, the nose sharp, the countenance sad. The head had fallen on His breast, the hair black with blood, the stomach collapsed, the arms and legs stiff, and the whole body covered with wounds and blood."

Mary also suffered all these pains of Jesus. Every torture inflicted on the body of Jesus, says Saint Jerome, was a wound in the heart of the Mother.

Anyone of us who should then have been on Mount Calvary, would have seen two altars, says Saint John Chrysostom, on

which two great sacrifices were consummating, one in the body of Jesus, the other in the heart of Mary. But rather would I see there, with Saint Bonaventure, one altar only, namely, the cross alone of the Son, on which, with the victim, this divine Lamb, the Mother also was sacrificed.

Therefore the saint interrogates her in these words: O Lady, where are you? Near the cross? No, on the cross, you are crucified with your Son.

Saint Augustine also says the same thing: The cross and nails of the Son were also the cross and nails of the Mother, Christ being crucified, the Mother was also crucified. Yes, because, as Saint Bernard says, love inflicted on the heart of Mary the same suffering that the nails caused in the body of Jesus. Therefore, at the same time that the Son was sacrificing His body, the Mother, as Saint Bernardino says, was sacrificing her soul.

Mothers flee from the presence of their dying children. But if a mother is ever obliged to witness the death of a child, she procures for him all possible relief. She arranges the bed, that his posture may be more easy. She administers refreshments to him. And thus the poor mother relieves her own sorrows.

Ah, Mother, the most afflicted of all mothers! O Mary, it was decreed that you should be present at the death of Jesus, but it was not given to you to afford Him any relief. Mary heard her Son say "I thirst," but it was not permitted her to give Him a little water to quench His great thirst.

She could only say to Him, as Saint Vincent Ferrer remarks, My Son, I have only the water of my tears: "*Fili, non habeo nisi aquara lacrymarum.*" She saw that her Son, suspended by three nails to that bed of sorrow could find no rest. She wished to clasp Him to her heart, that she might give Him relief, or at least that He might expire in her arms, but she could not. She only saw that poor Son in a sea of sorrow

seeking one who could console Him as He had predicted by the mouth of the prophet: "I have trodden the wine press alone. I looked about and there was none to help. I sought and there was none to give aid."

But who was there among men to console Him, if all were His enemies? Even on the cross they cursed and mocked Him on every side: "And they that passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads." Some said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Some exclaimed, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." Others said, "If he be the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross."

The blessed Virgin herself said to Saint Bridget: "I heard some call my Son a thief. I heard others call Him an impostor. Others said that no one deserved death more than He, and every word was to me a new sword of sorrow."

But what increased most the sorrows which Mary suffered through compassion for her Son, was to hear Him complain on the cross that even the Eternal Father had abandoned Him: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Words which, as the divine Mother herself said to Saint Bridget, could never depart from her mind during her whole life.

Thus the afflicted Mother saw her Jesus suffering on every side. She desired to comfort Him, but could not. And what caused her the greatest sorrow was to see that, by her presence and her grief, she increased the sufferings of her Son. The sorrow itself, says Saint Bernard, that filled the heart of Mary, increased the bitterness of sorrow in the heart of Jesus.

Saint Bernard also says, that Jesus on the cross suffered more from compassion for His Mother than from His own pains. He thus speaks in the name of the Virgin. I stood and looked on Him, and He looked on me, and He suffered more for me than for Himself. The same saint also, speaking of Mary beside her dying Son, says, that she lived dying

without being able to die: Near the cross stood His Mother, speechless. Living she died, dying she lived. Neither could she die, because she was dead, being yet alive.

Passino writes that Jesus Christ Himself, speaking one day to the blessed Baptista Varana of Camerino, said to her that He was so afflicted on the cross at the sight of His Mother in such anguish at His feet, that compassion for His Mother caused Him to die without consolation. So that the blessed Baptista, being enlightened to know this suffering of Jesus, exclaimed: "Oh my Lord, tell me no more of this your sorrow, for I cannot bear it."

Men were astonished, says Simon of Cascia, when they saw this Mother then keep silence, without uttering a complaint in this great suffering. But if the lips of Mary were silent, her heart was not so, for she did not cease offering to divine justice the life of her Son for our salvation.

Therefore we know that by the merits of her sorrows she co-operated with Christ in bringing us forth to the life of grace, and therefore we are children of her sorrows. Christ, says Lanspergius, wished her whom He had appointed for our Mother to co-operate with Him in our redemption, for she herself at the foot of the cross was to bring us forth as her children!

And if ever any consolation entered into that sea of bitterness, namely, the heart of Mary, it was this only one, namely, the knowledge that by means of her sorrows, she was bringing us to eternal salvation.

As Jesus Himself revealed to Saint Bridget: "My Mother Mary, on account of her compassion and charity, was made mother of all in Heaven and on earth." And, indeed, these were the last words with which Jesus took leave of her before His death. This was His last remembrance, leaving us to her for her children in the person of John, when He said to her: Woman, behold your Son: "*Mulier ecce filius tuus.*"

And from that time Mary began to perform for us this office of a good mother, for, as Saint Peter Dainian declares, the penitent thief, through the prayers of Mary, was then converted and saved. Therefore the good thief repented, because the blessed Virgin, standing between the cross of her Son and that of the thief, prayed to her Son for him, thus rewarding, by this favour, his former service.

For as other authors also relate, this thief, in the journey to Egypt with the infant Jesus, showed them kindness, and this same office the blessed Virgin has ever continued, and still continues to perform.

Example

A young man in Perugia once promised the devil that if he would help him to commit a sinful act which he desired to do, he would give him his soul, and he gave him a writing to that effect, signed with his blood.

The evil deed was committed, and the devil demanded the performance of the promise. He led the young man to a well, and threatened to take him body and soul to Hell if he would not cast himself into it.

The wretched youth, thinking that it would be impossible for him to escape from his enemy, climbed the well-side in order to cast himself into it, but terrified at the thought of death, he said to the devil that he had not the courage to throw himself in, and that, if he wished to see him dead, he himself should thrust him in.

The young man wore about his neck the scapular of the sorrowing Mary, and the devil said to him: "Take off that scapular, and I will thrust you in." But the youth, seeing the protection which the divine Mother still gave him through

that scapular, refused to take it off, and after a great deal of altercation the devil departed in confusion.

The sinner repented, and grateful to his sorrowful Mother, went to thank her, and presented a picture of this case, as an offering, at her altar in the new church of Santa Maria in Perugia.

Prayer

Ah, Mother, the most afflicted of all mothers, your Son, then, is dead. Your Son so amiable, and who loved you so much!

Weep, for you have reason to weep. Who can ever console you? Nothing can console you but the thought that Jesus, by His death, has conquered Hell, has opened Paradise which was closed to men, and has gained so many souls.

From that throne of the cross He was to reign over so many hearts, which, conquered by His love, would serve Him with love.

Do not disdain, my Mother, to keep me near to weep with you, for I have more reason than you to weep for the offences that I have committed against your Son.

Ah, Mother of mercy, I hope for pardon and my eternal salvation, first through the death of my Redeemer, and then through the merits of your sorrows. Amen.

The Sixth Sorrow - The piercing of Jesus' side and descent from the cross

Reflection

"All you that pass by the way attend and see if there be any sorrow like my sorrow."

Devout souls, listen to what the sorrowful Mary says to you today: My beloved children, I do not wish you to console me. No, for my heart can never again be consoled on this earth after the death of my dear Jesus. If you wish to please me, this I ask of you: turn to me and see if there has ever been in the world a grief like mine, when I saw Him who was all my love torn from me so cruelly.

But, O Lady, since you do not wish to be consoled, and have such a thirst for suffering, I must say to you that your sorrows have not ended with the death of your Son. Today you will be pierced by another sword of sorrow, when you will see a cruel lance piercing the side of this your Son, already dead, and will receive Him in your arms after He is taken from the cross.

And now we are to consider today the sixth sorrow which afflicted this sorrowful Mother. Attend and weep. Until now the sorrows of Mary tortured her one by one, but today they are all united to assail her.

To make known to a mother that her child is dead, is sufficient to kindle her whole soul with love for the lost one. Some persons, in order to lighten their grief, will remind mothers whose children have died of the displeasure they had once caused them.

But if I, O my queen, should wish to lighten your sorrow for the death of Jesus in this way, what displeasure has He ever caused you, that I could recall to your mind?

No, He always loved you, obeyed you and respected you. Now you have lost Him, and who can describe your sorrow? Do you who has felt it explain it. A devout author says, that when our Redeemer was dead, the heart of the great Mother was first engaged in accompanying the most holy soul of the Son, and presenting it to the Eternal Father.

I present you, O my God, Mary must then have said, the immaculate soul of your and my Son, which has been obedient to you even unto death: receive it, then, in your arms. Your justice is now satisfied, your will accomplished. Behold, the great sacrifice to your eternal glory is consummated.

And then turning to the lifeless members of her Jesus: "Oh wounds," she said, "Oh loving wounds, I adore you, I rejoice with you, since through you salvation has been given to the world. You will remain open in the body of my Son, to be the refuge of those who will have recourse to you. Oh how many, through you, will receive the pardon of their sins, and then through you will be inflamed to love the Sovereign Good! "

That the joy of the following Paschal Sabbath should not be disturbed, the Jews wished the body of Jesus to be taken down from the cross, but because they could not take down a criminal until he was dead, they came with iron mallets to break His legs, as they had already done to the two thieves crucified with Him.

And Mary, while she remains weeping at the death of her Son, sees those armed men coming towards her Jesus. At this sight she first trembled with fear, then she said: "Ah, my Son is already dead, cease to maltreat Him, and cease to torture me a poor mother longer." She implored them not to break His legs: "*Oravit eos, ne frangerent crura,*" as Saint

Bonaventure writes. But while she is thus speaking, O God! She sees a soldier with violence brandishing a spear, and piercing the side of Jesus: "One of the soldiers with a spear opened His side, and immediately there came out blood and water."

The cross shook at the stroke of the spear, and, as was revealed to Saint Bridget, the heart of Jesus was divided: "*Ita ut ambae paries essent divisse.*" There came out blood and water, for only a few drops of blood remained, and those also the Saviour wished to shed, in order to show that He had no more blood to give us. The injury of that stroke was offered to Jesus, but the pain was inflicted on Mary. Christ, says the devout Lanspergius, shared with His Mother the infliction of that wound, for He received the insult and His Mother the pain.

The holy Fathers explain this to be the very sword predicted to the Virgin by Saint Simeon; a sword, not of iron, but of grief, which pierced through her blessed soul in the heart of Jesus, where it always dwelt.

Thus, among others, Saint Bernard says, the spear which opened His side passed through the soul of the Virgin, which could not be torn from the heart of Jesus. And the divine Mother herself revealed the same to Saint Bridget, saying: "When the spear was drawn out, the point appeared red with blood. Then I felt as if my heart were pierced when I saw the heart of my most dear Son pierced."

The angel told Saint Bridget that such were the sufferings of Mary, that she was saved from death only by the miraculous power of God. In her other sorrows she at least had her Son to compassionate her, and now she had not even Him to take pity on her.

The afflicted Mother, still fearing that other injuries might be inflicted on her Son, entreats Joseph of Arimathea to obtain from Pilate the body of her Jesus, that at least after His death

she may be able to guard it and protect it from injuries. Joseph went to Pilate, and made known to him the sorrow and the wish of this afflicted Mother, and Saint Anselm thinks that compassion for the Mother softened the heart of Pilate, and moved Him to grant her the body of the Saviour.

And now Jesus is taken from the cross. O most holy Virgin, after you with so great love had given your Son to the world for our salvation, behold the world returns Him to you again! But, O my God, how do you return him to me? said Mary to the world. My Son was white and ruddy: "*Dilectus meus candidus et rubicundus*" but you have returned him to me blackened with bruises, and red, not with a ruddy colour, but with the wounds you have inflicted on Him. He was beautiful, now there is no more beauty in Him. He is all deformity.

All were enamoured with His aspect, now He excites horror in all who look on Him. Oh, how many swords, says Saint Bonaventure, pierced the soul of this Mother, when she received the body of her Son after it was taken from the cross: "*O quot gladii animam matris pertransierunt!*"

Let us consider what anguish it would cause any mother to receive the lifeless body of a son! It was revealed to Saint Bridget, that to take down the body of Jesus, three ladders were placed against the cross. Those holy disciples first drew out the nails from the hands and feet, and according to Metaphrastes, gave them in charge to Mary. Then one supported the upper part of the body of Jesus, the other the lower, and thus took it down from the cross.

Bernardino de Bustis describes the afflicted Mother as raising herself, and extending her arms to meet her dear Son, She embraces Him and then sits down at the foot of the cross. She sees His mouth open, His eye shut, she examines the lacerated flesh, and those exposed bones. She takes off the crown and sees the cruel injury made by those thorns in

that sacred head. She looks on those pierced hands and feet and says: "Ah, my Son, to what has the love you bore to men reduced you! But what evil have you done to them, that they have treated you so cruelly?"

"You were my Father," Bernardino de Bustis imagines her to say, "my brother, my spouse, my delight, my glory, my all. O my Son, behold how I am afflicted, look on me and console me, but you look on me no more. Speak, speak to me but one word, and console me, but you speak no more, for you are dead." Then turning to those barbarous instruments, she said: "O cruel thorns, O nails, Oh merciless spear, how could you thus torture your Creator? But what thorns, what nails?" "Alas! sinners," she exclaimed, "it is you who have thus cruelly treated my Son." Thus Mary spoke and complained of us.

But if now she were capable of suffering, what would she say? What grief would she feel to see that men after the death of her Son, continue to torment and crucify Him by their sins? Let us no longer give pain to this sorrowful Mother and if we also have until now grieved her by our sins, let us now do what she directs.

She says to us, Return, you transgressors, to the heart: "*Redite, praevaricatores, ad cor.*" Sinners, return to the wounded heart of my Jesus. Return as penitents, for He will receive you. Flee from Him to Him, she continues to say with Gueric the Abbot, from the Judge to the Redeemer, from the tribunal to the cross.

The Virgin herself revealed to Saint Bridget that she closed the eyes of her Son when He was taken down from the cross, but she could not close His arms: "*Ejus brachia flectere non potui.*" Jesus Christ gives us to understand by this that He desired to remain with open arms to receive all penitent sinners who return to Him. O world, continues Mary, behold,

then, your time is the time of levers: "*Et ecce, tempus tuum, tempus amandin.*"

Now that your Son, O world, has died to save you, this is no longer for you a time of fear, but of love — a time to love Him who has desired to suffer so much in order to show you the love He bore you. Therefore, says Saint Bernard, is the heart of Jesus wounded that, through the visible wound, the invisible wound of love may be seen.

If then, concludes Mary, in the words of the Abbot of Celles, my Son had wished His side to be opened that He might give you his heart, it is right, O man, that you should give Him your heart. And if you wish, O children of Mary, to find a place in the heart of Jesus without fear of being cast out, go, says Ubertino of Casale, go with Mary, for she will obtain grace for you, and in the following example we have a beautiful proof of this.

Example

The Disciple relates that there was once a poor sinner who, among other crimes, had killed his father and a brother, and therefore became a fugitive.

Happening to hear one day during Lent a sermon on the Divine Mercy, he went to the preacher himself to make his Confession. The confessor having heard his crimes, sent him to an altar of the sorrowful Mother to pray that she might obtain for him compunction and pardon of his sins.

The sinner obeyed, and began to pray, when behold, suddenly over powered by contrition, he fell down dead.

On the following day when the priest recommended to the people to pray for the deceased, a white dove appeared in the church and let fall a card at the feet of the priest.

He took it up, and found these words written on it: "The soul of the dead, when it left the body, immediately went to Paradise, and do you continue to preach the infinite mercy of God."

Prayer

O afflicted Virgin! O soul, great in virtues and great also in sorrows, for both arise from that great fire of love you have for God! You, "whose heart can love nothing but God," O Mother, have pity on me, for I have not loved God, and I have so much offended Him.

Your sorrows give me great confidence to hope for pardon. But this is not enough. I wish to love my Lord, and who can better obtain this for me than you who are the Mother of fair love?

O Mary, you console all, comfort me also. Amen.

The Seventh Sorrow - The burial of Jesus in the sepulchre

Reflection

When a mother is by the side of a suffering and dying child, she no doubt then feels and suffers all his pains, but when the afflicted child is really dead and about to be buried, and the sorrowful Mother takes her last leave of him. O God! The thought that she is to see him no more is a sorrow that exceeds all other sorrows.

Behold, the last sword of sorrow which we are to consider, when Mary, after being present at the death of her Son on the cross, after having embraced His lifeless body, was finally to leave Him in the sepulchre, never more to enjoy His beloved presence.

But that we may better understand this last sorrow, let us return to Calvary, again to look on the afflicted Mother, who still holds, clasped in her arms, the lifeless body of her Son.

O my Son, she seems then to continue to say in the words of Job, my Son, you are changed to be cruel towards me: "*Mutatus es mihi in crudelem.*" Yes, for all your beauty, grace, virtue and loveliness, all the signs of special love you have have shown me, the peculiar favours you have bestowed on me, are all changed into so many darts of sorrow, which the more they have inflamed my love for you, so much the more cause me cruelly to feel the pain of having lost you.

Ah, my beloved Son, in losing you I have lost all. Thus Saint Bernard speaks in her name: O truly begotten of God, you were to me a father, a son, a spouse. You were my life! Now I

am deprived of my father, my spouse and my Son, for with my Son whom I have lost, I lose all things.

Thus Mary, clinging to her Son, was dissolved in grief, but those holy disciples, fearing lest this poor Mother would expire there through agony, went to take the body of her Son from her arms, to bear it away for burial. Therefore, with reverential force they took Him from her arms, and having embalmed Him, wrapped Him in a linen cloth already prepared, on which our Lord wished to leave to the world His image impressed, as may be seen at the present day in Turin.

And now they bear Him to the sepulchre. The sorrowful funeral train sets forth. The disciples place Him on their shoulders. Hosts of angels from heaven accompany Him. Those holy women follow Him and the afflicted Mother follows in their company her Son to the grave. When they had reached the appointed place, how gladly would Mary have buried herself there alive with her Son! "Oh how willingly," said the Virgin to Saint Bridget, "would I have remained there alive with my Son, if it had been His will!"

But since this was not the Divine Will, the authors relate that she herself accompanied the sacred body of Jesus into the sepulchre, where, as Baronius narrates, they deposited the nails and the crown of thorns.

In raising the stone to close the sepulchre, the disciples of the Saviour had to turn to the Virgin, and say to her: Now, O Lady, we must close the sepulchre. Have patience, look on your Son, and take leave of Him for the last time. Then, O my beloved Son, must the afflicted Mother have said, then will I see you no more? Receive then, this last time that I look on you, receive the last farewell from me your dear Mother, and receive my heart which I leave buried with you.

The Virgin, says Saint Fulgentius, earnestly desired that her soul should be buried with the body of Christ. And Mary

herself made this revelation to St. Bridget: "I can truly say, that at the burial of my Son, one sepulchre contained as it were two hearts."

Finally, they take the stone and close up in the holy sepulchre the body of Jesus, that great treasure, greater than any in heaven and on earth. And here let us remark that Mary left her heart buried with Jesus, because Jesus was all her treasure: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." And where will we keep our hearts buried? With creatures? In the mire? And why not with Jesus, who, although He has ascended to heaven, has wished to remain, not dead but alive, in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, precisely in order that he may have with Him and possess our hearts?

But let us return to Mary. Before quitting the sepulchre, according to Saint Bonaventure, she blessed that sacred stone, saying: "O happy stone, that now encloses that body which was contained nine months in my womb, I bless you and envy you. I leave you to guard my Son for me, who is my only good, my only love." And then turning to the eternal Father, she said: "O Father, to you I recommend Him, who is your Son and mine," and thus bidding a last farewell to her Son, and to the sepulchre, she returned to her own house.

This poor Mother went away so afflicted and sad, according to Saint Bernard, that she moved many to tears even against their will: "*Multos etiam invitos ad lacrymas provocabat*" so that wherever she passed, all wept who met her: "*Omnes plorabant qui obviabant ei*" and could not restrain their tears. And he adds that those holy disciples, and the women who accompanied her, mourned for her even more than for their Lord.

Saint Bonaventure says that her two sisters covered her with a mourning cloak. The sisters of our Lady wrapped her in a veil as a widow, covering as it were her whole countenance.

And he also says that passing on her return before the cross, still wet with the blood of her Jesus, she was the first to adore it.

O holy cross, she exclaimed, I kiss you and adore you, for you are no longer an infamous wood, but a throne of love, and an altar of mercy, consecrated by the blood of the divine Lamb, who has been sacrificed on you, for the salvation of the world.

She then leaves the cross and returns to her house. There the afflicted Mother casts her eyes around, and no longer sees her Jesus, but instead of the presence of her dear Son, all the memorials of His holy life and cruel death are before her.

There she is reminded of the embraces she gave her Son in the stable of Bethlehem, of the conversations held with Him for so many years in the shop of Nazareth. She is reminded of their mutual affection, of His loving looks, of the words of eternal life that came forth from that divine mouth.

And then comes before her the fatal scene of that very day. She sees those nails, those thorns, that lacerated flesh of her Son, those deep wounds, those uncovered bones, that open mouth, those closed eyes.

Alas, what a night of sorrow was that night for Mary! The sorrowful Mother turned to Saint John and said mournfully: "Ah, John, where is your master?" Then she asked of the Magdalene: "Daughter, tell me where is your beloved? O God, who has taken him from us?"

Mary weeps, and all those who are with her weep. And you, my soul, you do not weep! Turn to Mary and say to her with Saint Bonaventure: Let me, my Lady, let me weep; you are innocent, I am guilty. At least entreat her to permit you to weep with her: "*Fac ut tecum lugeam.*" She weeps for love, and you weep through sorrow for your sins. And thus

weeping, you may have the happy lot of him of whom we read in the following example.

Example

Father Engelgrave relates that a certain religious was so tormented by scruples that some times he was almost driven to despair, but having great devotion to Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, he had recourse to her in the agony of his spirit, and was much comforted by contemplating her sorrows.

Death came, and the devil tormented him more than ever with scruples, and tempted him to despair.

When, behold our merciful Mother, seeing her poor son so afflicted, appeared to him, and said to him: "Why, my son, are you so overcome with sorrow, you who have so often consoled me by your compassion for my sorrows? Be comforted," she said to him, "Jesus sends me to you to console you. Be comforted, rejoice, and come with me to Paradise."

And at these words the devout religious tranquilly expired, full of consolation and confidence.

Prayer

My afflicted Mother, I will not leave you alone to weep. No, I wish to keep you company with my tears.

This grace I ask of you today. Obtain for me a continual remembrance of the Passion of Jesus, and of yours also, and a tender devotion to them, that all the remaining days of my life may be spent in weeping for your sorrows, O my Mother, and for those of my Redeemer, I hope that these sorrows will give me the confidence and strength not to despair at the

hour of my death, at the sight of the offences I have committed against my Lord.

By these must I obtain pardon, perseverance and Paradise, where I hope to rejoice with you, and sing the infinite mercy of my God through all eternity. Thus I hope, thus may it be. Amen, amen.

(The Glories of Mary (1888) 587)

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